

**Simon Somerville Laurie:  
His Educational Thought and Contribution to  
Scottish Education.  
1855 - 1909**

Ian Godfrey Templeton

PhD

The University of Edinburgh

2010

### Disclaimer

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis, that the following thesis is entirely my own work and that no part of this thesis has been submitted for another degree or qualification.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Professors Robert D. Anderson and Lindsay Paterson of Edinburgh University for their help and support throughout the period of my research.

## Contents

<b>Introduction – Biographical and Statement of Thesis</b>	<b>Page</b> 2-26
Chapter 1      Introduction and Statement of Thesis	2
Chapter II     Main Appointments	13
 <b>Part I – Laurie's Thought</b>	 27 - 92
Chapter III     Metaphysics and Ethics	27
Chapter IV     Educational Philosophy	41
Chapter V      Psychology	60
Chapter VI     Method	81
 <b>Part II – Laurie's Practical Contribution</b>	 93 - 262
Chapter VII     Dick Bequest	93
Chapter VIII    Endowment Reform pre-1872	117
Chapter IX      Endowment Reform post-1872	137
Chapter X       Curriculum 1860-1873	158
Chapter XI      Curriculum 1873-1904	175
Chapter XII     Training of Teachers pre-1872	205
Chapter XIII    Training of Teachers 1872-1885	224
Chapter XIV    Training of Teachers 1885-1906	250
 <b>Conclusion</b>	 263-268
Chapter XV      Conclusion	263
Bibliography	269

## Chapter 1 – Introduction and Statement of Thesis

Simon Somerville Laurie was born in Edinburgh on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1829. He was the eldest son of James Laurie, who was at the time chaplain to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and Jean Somerville, herself the daughter of a presbyterian minister. Laurie was educated at the Edinburgh High School and subsequently at Edinburgh University. He graduated from Edinburgh University in 1849 and spent five years as a private tutor before returning to Edinburgh to take up, in 1855, the post of secretary to the education committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He held this post for fifty years and added to it two other official posts: visitor and examiner for the trustees of the Dick bequest, from 1856 until 1907, and professor at the University of Edinburgh, as the first holder of the Bell Chair in the Theory, History and Art of Education, from 1876 until 1903.

Laurie was also invited to write reports for the Merchant Company of Edinburgh pointing the way to reform of their endowed schools, to give evidence to a number of royal commissions and parliamentary inquiries, and to act as secretary to one royal commission, the Colebrooke Commission, and to the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education in Scotland. He also wrote books and articles and gave numerous lectures, many of which were subsequently published.

Laurie was thus both a leading theorist and closely concerned with almost all of the practical developments in the provision of education in Scotland for half a century. In an anonymous obituary published in 1910<sup>1</sup> the author described Laurie as ‘a singularly attractive personality’ and suggested that a full account of his influence should be written. With the exception of a brief chapter on Laurie in Alexander Morgan’s book, *The Makers of Scottish Education* published in 1929, this never happened. There is, however, a doctoral thesis lodged in the special collections of Edinburgh University library on Laurie which was submitted in 1949 by H. M. Knox entitled *The Educational Writings of Simon*

---

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, April 1909, Vol 18, 328

*Somerville Laurie MA, LL.D, FEIS, FRSE (1829-1909) First Bell Professor of The Theory, History, and Art, of Education in the University of Edinburgh (1876-1903).*

It is evident from even this very brief sketch of Laurie's work that he was a man of considerable energy with an appetite for hard work. This work can be conveniently divided into three interdependent categories. As a philosopher he published three major philosophical works: *Ethica*, under the pseudonym 'Scotus Novanticus' in 1885, *Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta*, under the same pseudonym, in 1889 and *Synthetica: being meditations epistemological and ontological* in 1906. He wrote many books and articles on educational topics, some theoretical and some commentaries on the issues of the day. And as an administrator he was practically involved with the inspection of schools, the running of training colleges and the writing of reports and memorials to government.

It is important to appreciate that, for Laurie, all educational activity ought to have a philosophical, indeed an ethical, foundation. On an individual level he wrote that, 'No-one I suppose doubts that the ethical life for each man in his striving for self-realisation is such a life as shall promote the development of human capacities and possibilities, and so further the "Good" for himself and the race.'<sup>2</sup> On a social level, he defined education as, 'The means which a nation takes for bringing up its citizens to maintain the tradition of national character and for promoting the welfare of the whole as an organised ethical community.'<sup>3</sup> In an important sense, all Laurie's educational writing and all the causes to which he devoted his life were predicated on these two ideas.

It is impossible to do justice to every aspect of Laurie's life and work in a single thesis but neither a consideration of his ideas nor of his practical work can, on its own, convey a complete picture of his contribution. Knox chose to approach Laurie primarily through his theory. He derived the structure of his thesis from the full title of Laurie's chair at the university. Thus, in a thesis which runs to thirteen chapters, the first two and the last comprising the introduction, biographical details and conclusion, chapters III to VIII focus on the 'theory of education' through consideration of Laurie's work such as his *Institutes of*

---

<sup>2</sup> Scotus Novanticus (S. S. Laurie), *Ethica*, (Edinburgh, 1891), 13

<sup>3</sup> Laurie, *Historical Survey of pre-Christian Education*, (London, 1900), 2

*Education*; chapters IX and X consider his contribution to the 'history of education', again through his published work, and chapters XI and XII consider the 'art of education'. It is only in these last two chapters that some consideration is given to Laurie's educational reports, evidence to royal commissions and parliamentary committees and so on. Even there, the emphasis is on understanding Laurie's positions rather than on tracing any practical outcome of them. By contrast, this thesis will place more emphasis on an attempt to evaluate Laurie's practical influence on the actual outcome of events in Scotland between 1855 and 1907. Consideration of Laurie's philosophy will be given in the early chapters and to his practical work, with particular reference to endowments, the Dick bequest, the curriculum, and the training of teachers, in the later ones. His involvement with royal commissions and parliamentary inquiries will be relevant to all these sections but the latter two will be approached primarily through Laurie's work as secretary to the education committee of the Church of Scotland. Since each of Laurie's various appointments tended to have an impact on more than one of the areas identified above chapter II gives some of the background to his career and to the major appointments which Laurie held.

Before doing this it will be worth giving at least some insight into Laurie's character as seen by others at the time and to formulate the thesis which subsequent chapters will consider. Unfortunately, there are serious gaps in the surviving material relating to Laurie. There are references by others to letters which he wrote but very few of these survive. There is a limited collection in the papers of George Combe, the noted phrenologist, who was a regular correspondent of Laurie's during his early years as a tutor and there are a few isolated references to personal correspondence in other collections. There are also official letters which Laurie wrote which are to be found either in government archives or recorded in the relevant minute books. However, there is no surviving archive of Laurie's own papers despite the fact that he would certainly, in accordance with the custom of the time, have been a prolific letter writer. This is evidenced by consideration of the dates on his correspondence with Combe when Laurie frequently replied to the letters he received by return of post. It is therefore necessary to rely on the few letters which do exist and on what was said about Laurie after he died for a picture of the private man himself.

Laurie was not from a wealthy family and during his time as a student at Edinburgh University he served as an assistant to Professor James Pillans in order to earn some money, graduating a year later than would otherwise have been expected as a consequence. This spell as Pillans' assistant is important in two ways. It was Laurie's first experience of acting as an educator and no doubt it was in part this which led him to seek a post as a private tutor and thus set him on his chosen career path. More importantly, Pillans himself had a lifelong interest in the theory as well as the practice of education. He contributed several articles to the *Edinburgh Review* and delivered lectures on such subjects as seminaries for teachers, the need for classical training, the place of corporal punishment in schools, and the purpose of examinations. Some of Pillans' ideas foreshadowed those of Laurie himself and it is very likely that it was Pillans who inspired Laurie to devote his life to education. There is no doubt that Laurie held Pillans in high regard and had an affection for him. In a letter which Combe sent to Laurie we find the phrase 'I met your uncle lately, Mr Pillans'.<sup>4</sup> Pillans was not Laurie's uncle but clearly occupied the position of 'honorary uncle'<sup>5</sup> in his life. It is also surely significant that Laurie named his own son 'Arthur Pillans Laurie'. It also seems very likely that it was Pillans who secured for Laurie his first post as a private tutor. This was with T. M. Kennedy, the member of parliament for Ayr, and Pillans had corresponded with Kennedy on the subject of education in the 1830s.<sup>6</sup> Comparatively little is known about Laurie's time as a tutor but there is enough in his letters to Combe to give a tantalising glimpse of the early stages of his career. It was the first time that Laurie had been away from home; he was employed by the Kennedy family and worked in Ayrshire and in Ireland and early on in his employment we find Combe writing in these terms:

---

<sup>4</sup> Combe to Laurie 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1850, papers of George Combe vol 7392, 74, National Library of Scotland

<sup>5</sup> Uncle – 'Used as a form of address to an older man 1793', Oxford English Dictionary

<sup>6</sup> J. Pillans, Letters contained in *Principles of Elementary Teaching*, (Edinburgh, 1828)<sup>6</sup> *Mind*, April 1909, Vol 18, 328

<sup>6</sup> Scotus Novanticus (S. S. Laurie), *Ethica*, (Edinburgh, 1891), 13

<sup>6</sup> Laurie, *Historical Survey of pre-Christian Education*, (London, 1900), 2

<sup>6</sup> Combe to Laurie 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1850, papers of George Combe vol 7392, 74, National Library of Scotland

<sup>6</sup> Uncle – 'Used as a form of address to an older man 1793', Oxford English Dictionary

<sup>6</sup> J. Pillans, Letters contained in *Principles of Elementary Teaching*, (Edinburgh

Your sadness must have either a moral or a physiological cause. A young man with large moral organs and strong domestic affections suddenly deprived of all accustomed objects which have gratified these faculties by being transported to a new scene and placed among strangers inevitably feels sad for a time. ... The remedy is to be found in finding new objects for the bereaved faculties.<sup>7</sup>

This was clearly in reply to an earlier letter from Laurie and while Combe, as a phrenologist, was inclined to look for explanations rooted in his beliefs it seems likely that this was simply a case of homesickness. Laurie remained with the Kennedy family only until October 1851. In spite of his youth he was not without confidence or ambition. In March of that year he wrote to Combe to say, 'I have determined to remain with Mr Kennedy (unless some unforeseen occurrence should meanwhile take place) in the hope that he will make good a promise which he made to me of procuring some government situation when Frank goes to school.'<sup>8</sup> There is no indication of what this 'government situation' might have been but it is interesting, if unproductive, to reflect that it seems as if Laurie might have been lost to education had he stayed with the family and had Kennedy found him the post he wanted. In the event, Laurie became unhappy in his situation and felt unappreciated. 'I heard not one word of approbation from either Mr or Mrs Kennedy and as I am more apt to think that I am not giving perfect satisfaction than that I am.' He also felt that he was not accorded the status he believed was his due. 'I was not brought forward so much as I could have desired and one who has the name of a gentleman as well as of a servant had a right to expect.' As a consequence, Laurie requested both a salary increase and better working conditions, being apparently encouraged to do so by Pillans. 'With Mr. Pillans' approbation I requested an increase of salary and a new arrangement as to hours of occupation.'<sup>9</sup> These requests were turned down and Laurie duly left the Kennedys' employment and took up another position as a private tutor. However, he remained unsatisfied with this as a long-term prospect and in 1854 he applied for the post of assistant inspector of schools. Although he did not secure this post it was not to be long before he did find a permanent position, as secretary to the education committee of the Church of Scotland. Apart from these letters from and to Combe there is little material which could provide an insight to Laurie's character, other than his own actions, until much later in his life and, of course, when his obituaries came to be written. One of the best sources is not

---

<sup>7</sup> Combe to Laurie 14th October 1849, papers of George Combe vol 7391, 820, NLS

<sup>8</sup> Laurie to Combe 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1851, papers of George Combe vol 7313, 19, NLS

<sup>9</sup> Laurie to Combe 1<sup>st</sup> October 1851, papers of George Combe vol 7317, 40, NLS



actually an obituary, though it was written after Laurie's death. Amelia Hutchison Stirling wrote a biography of her father, James, who was perhaps Laurie's closest friend. In it she writes of this friendship and of Laurie's character. She describes Laurie as being of 'independent character and intellect' and as possessing 'a practical wisdom, a knowledge of the world and of human character, which are not usually found united with a love of metaphysical speculation.' Stirling paints a picture of a man who polarised opinion:

If it was for his fearless candour, his honesty, his robust intellect, his strong common-sense that his friends admired Laurie, it was for the unselfishness, the generosity the broad humanity, the warm affection of the man that they loved him. No doubt, there were people who saw in him only the faults of his virtues, people by whom his strength and decision of character were set down as dogmatism, his fearless candour was regarded as pugnacity, his vehemence in denouncing falsehood or folly was stigmatized as intolerance.<sup>10</sup>

Examples of the adverse reaction which he could provoke can be found at intervals in editorials in *The Scotsman*, typical of which was, 'We have received a letter from Professor Laurie, which is characterised by even more than what we must now call his usual insolence and smallness.'<sup>11</sup> Nor was it only the press whom he antagonised. Sir Henry Craik at the Scotch Education Department found him a thorn in the flesh from time to time. In a letter to the Marquis of Lothian he wrote, 'It is impossible to satisfy Prof Simon Laurie unless you appointed a Commission with him as Secretary & gave carte blanche to that Commission.'<sup>12</sup>

So Laurie, as is often the case with strong characters, could inspire great friendship and loyalty and could upset people with the bluntness of his views and a certainty which sometimes bordered on arrogance. At the same time he clearly had a romantic streak. He was married twice, the first time in 1861 to Catherine Hibburd, who died in 1895. Catherine was born in Egham, Surrey, the daughter of William, a saddler who later became Clerk to Ascot Racecourse.<sup>13</sup> After Catherine's death Laurie produced a booklet entitled *In Memoriam Catherine Laurie*. This consisted of a collection of poems and other writing which Catherine herself had saved and

---

<sup>10</sup> A. Hutchison Stirling, *James Hutchison Stirling*, (London, 1912), 358-359

<sup>11</sup> Editorial in *The Scotsman*, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1879

<sup>12</sup> Sir Henry Craik to the Marquis of Lothian, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1892, ED/7/1/78, National Archives of Scotland

<sup>13</sup> Hibburd of Egham, [www.genealogy.links.org](http://www.genealogy.links.org)

which had been important to her. There is an introduction, written by Laurie, which was intended for his two daughters. The picture Laurie paints of his wife is that of someone who was, 'able without being overpowering an intellect', 'full of good works and much loved', 'interested in others but not judgemental'. He also describes her as, 'a Conservative in politics though of a romantic kind'.<sup>14</sup> Catherine was evidently an interesting person in her own right. She taught in an evening school in Birmingham and also opened a home for factory girls.<sup>15</sup> *In Memoriam Catherine Laurie* is clearly a testimonial from a man who loved and admired his wife and it ends with the touching inclusion of a poem which Laurie himself had written many years previously.<sup>16</sup> Laurie then added, 'Though to quote these lines may seem to be an intruding of myself too much, I do so because, though quite forgotten by me, I found them, after her death, among the very few things carefully preserved.'<sup>17</sup>

Six years after Catherine's death Laurie married Lucy, the daughter of Sir John Struthers, Professor of Anatomy at Aberdeen University.

Although not strictly germane to Laurie's writings and his work as an educationalist, these few observations on his character may serve as a useful context in which to understand the man and his ideas.

While Laurie's views remained remarkably consistent throughout his life it is possible to be surprised by some of the attitudes he displayed. He was essentially conservative in his social and educational outlook, and, indeed, in his politics – 'I

---

<sup>14</sup> Laurie, *In Memoriam Catherine Laurie*, (privately printed, 1895)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> How many days and years are spent  
Since you to earth by Heaven were lent  
I do not know – a gracious boon divine;  
But this I know, I saw the light  
Then first on that November night  
When as a star you rose and shed  
Those beams that brought me from the dead:  
And still I live, for still undimmed you shine.

<sup>17</sup> Laurie, *In Memoriam Catherine Laurie*, (privately printed, 1895)

am myself a Conservative’<sup>18</sup> (Given that this phrase appeared in a letter from Laurie to the paper and that it is printed with a capital ‘C’, it can be assumed here that Laurie was using the word in its party political sense.) For example, he argued throughout his life for the retention of the classical curriculum and was reluctant to embrace the increasing trend towards teaching science in schools. He even went so far as to argue that, ‘There is no science possible for children of nine or ten years of age.’<sup>19</sup>

He also believed in an almost pre-ordained class system. In a comment on the question of boarding he wrote, ‘You have the evil of separating boys from their own class and dissociating them from the education of home influences and worthy poverty.’<sup>20</sup> At the same time, Laurie showed an ‘enlightened’ approach towards discipline in schools saying that a teacher should, ‘Never punish if you can attain your end without it ... let your punishment be the minimum which will attain the end.’<sup>21</sup> The same enlightened attitudes were evidenced by his involvement with the Edinburgh Ladies Educational Association and Laurie is included in the first published list of honorary members of the Association.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly for someone whose ideas underwent so little revision during a long life he could be dogmatic and even intolerant at times. For example, in his inaugural address as professor he asserts that a university curriculum on philosophy and history differs ‘in its very essence’ from that on even similar subjects in a training college. He does not justify this but simply states that the person who cannot see this has a defective imagination and adds, ‘To such minds I do not address myself.’<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, he is at times excessively inclined to labour to see the other person’s point of view. In a review of *The Philosophy of Ethics* in *The Scotsman* in 1866 the reviewer writes:

---

<sup>18</sup> *The Scotsman*, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1884

<sup>19</sup> Laurie, ‘On the Educational Wants of Scotland’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Edinburgh, 1882), 288

<sup>20</sup> Laurie, ‘On Higher Primary Schools’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 157

<sup>21</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London 1892), 235

<sup>22</sup> *Report of the ELEA*, ref 1877/1.1, NAS

<sup>23</sup> Laurie, ‘The Teaching Profession and Chairs of Education’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 9

In the able analytical essay before us Mr Laurie does not enlist himself on either the Utilitarian or the Intuitionist side. He recognises the truth and assails the errors in both so impartially that he runs the risk of being reckoned an enemy by both. To us it seems that his sympathies lie strongly with the Intuitionists but that, owing to his love of fairness or some other cause, his best arguments are put forth for the Utilitarians.<sup>24</sup>

The aim of this thesis is to consider Laurie's practical contribution to the development of education in Scotland during the latter half of the nineteenth century in the context of his own thought. In conjunction with this, consideration will be given to the apparent paradox of Laurie's place in history. It is evident from consideration of the posts Laurie held, the evidence which he gave to parliamentary inquiries, and from his writings, that Laurie was a major and highly significant figure on the Scottish educational scene for some fifty years. He directed both the Church of Scotland's education committee and the work of the Dick bequest and he served as the first professor of education in Edinburgh. Even if he had never expressed any significant ideas, which is not being suggested, or put forward any original suggestions, which remains to be seen, he would necessarily have had a considerable influence on day to day events. At the time of his death, Darroch, in his appreciation of Laurie, could say, 'As a writer on the Theory and History of Education, the late Professor Laurie occupied a unique and distinguished position in the history of educational thought.'<sup>25</sup> Foster Watson had gone so far as to describe him as, 'the Comenius of our generation'<sup>26</sup> and J. J. Findlay wrote that:

In earlier days men like Locke in England, Herbart in Germany and Laurie in Scotland, did attempt these bolder flights; endowed with great philosophic insight, and experiences also as instructors of youth, they expounded a complete system. It derogates nothing from these famous thinkers to say that the practical value of their systems has depreciated with the passage of time. The example of these great thinkers is scarcely likely to be imitated, for, with the increasing specialization of function which characterises the modern world, we shall not again find a philosopher to compare with these great minds of the past, who framed a system of ethics and philosophy which could be reduced to the terms of an educational manual.<sup>27</sup>

These tributes constitute high praise indeed and they would not have been made unless Laurie had gained a considerable reputation. However, a reputation gained during a working lifetime does not necessarily lead to being remembered by subsequent generations

---

<sup>24</sup> *The Scotsman*, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1867

<sup>25</sup> *Educational News*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1909

<sup>26</sup> F. Watson, 'Professor Laurie', *Educational Review*, Vol IX, 1895

<sup>27</sup> J. J. Findlay, *The School: an introduction to the study of education*, (London, 1911), 62

and there have been no published studies of Laurie and his ideas, other than Knox's thesis, either in Scotland or in Britain as a whole since his death; an online search of the national libraries of America, France and Germany reveals that they do contain copies of Laurie's own work, published during his lifetime, but that, again, there have been no subsequent studies of him. Thus it is that Knox was able to write, 'Within forty years of his death the name of the greatest Scottish educationalist of the latter half of last century is almost entirely forgotten.'<sup>28</sup>

The question which therefore arises is simply this. If Laurie was indeed as central to the development of Scottish education as might have been expected from the posts he held, the length of time for which he held them and the tributes which were paid to him after his death by Darroch and Foster Watson, why is it that his name is not now generally remembered?

There are of course many different kinds of contribution which constitute an individual's legacy and there is a significant difference between leaving an important legacy and being remembered by posterity. Every field of human endeavour has had its 'unsung heroes' whose contribution has been important but whose names are not now remembered. Every field of human endeavour has also produced figures who, however long ago they may have lived, simply cannot be ignored in any complete treatment of the subject. For example, it would be impossible to discuss empirical philosophy without consideration of Locke, or child-centred education without mentioning Rousseau.

Laurie was a prolific writer on philosophy and on education; he was central to the administration of the training colleges run by the Church of Scotland and to inspections of Dick bequest schools in the north east and in addition, he was the first holder of the Bell Chair in the Theory, History and Art of Education at the University of Edinburgh and, as such, integral to the way in which this new chair developed. There are thus several ways in which he might have established his place in history.

---

<sup>28</sup> H. M. Knox, *The Educational Writings of Simon Somerville Laurie MA, LL.D, FEIS, FRSE (1829-1909) First Bell Professor of The Theory, History, and Art, of Education in the University of Edinburgh (1876-1903)*, (Doctoral Thesis, 1949), 1, Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library

It will not be suggested that the histories of the institutions which Laurie served during his working life fail to give him his due and, as indicated in chapter II, there are four posts for which Laurie either applied or which he was invited to take up which, had he secured or accepted them, might have provided a greater opportunity for historical recognition. However, although administrators, civil servants, professors, headmasters and founders of new institutions such as colleges, are extremely important in their own fields and in their own time, and although specialist historical accounts of the institutions they served will record their contributions, it is very rare that such figures are genuinely remembered by posterity unless they have had an unusually high public profile or, more significantly, have propounded original ideas or have created genuinely new ways carrying out their work which have then become the template for subsequent generations.

Thus the extent of Laurie's contribution to the development of Scottish education is a separate issue from the question of his place in history. An attempt will be made to evaluate his influence in his own time but it will be argued that it was a wider and lasting recognition, such as that given to Locke and Rousseau and others of comparable stature, which eluded him. In spite of Findlay's tribute, Laurie was not in that category and it will be argued that this was essentially due to the fact that his contribution was not at any stage truly original. Consequently, he did not inspire followers dedicated to preserving his work and his name and when the ideas which he espoused went out of fashion so also did he.

The question which this thesis therefore seeks to answer is not whether Laurie was influential; he was undoubtedly an influential and important figure in many areas. Nor is the task to trace consequences of his influence after his retirement from the various posts he held. The task is rather to establish the extent of his practical influence on the course of the development of education during his lifetime and to determine whether Laurie was either an original or a seminal thinker and, therefore, whether the influence which he exerted on events was distinctively his in such a way that, had it not been for him, events would not have unfolded as they did. In so doing, it may also be possible to explain how he came to be, in Knox's words 'almost entirely forgotten'.

## CHAPTER II –Laurie’s Main Appointments

After five years as a private tutor, about which little is known and during which time Laurie neither published anything nor exerted any practical influence, he returned to Edinburgh to take up the first and, arguably, the most important of the posts he was to hold, that of secretary to the education committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

### Secretary to the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland 1855 - 1905

According to the 1851 educational census, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, through its education committee, was responsible at the time for 537 schools out of a total number of day-schools comprising 1,385 church schools and 3,857 others.<sup>1</sup> (This compares with 712 schools under the control of the Free Church, 61 United Presbyterian, 36 Episcopal, 32 Roman Catholic and 8 of other denominations.) It was also responsible for two normal schools for the training of teachers. These schools were funded partly by government in the form of grants for school buildings and for pupil teachers. However, it was the responsibility of the Church to raise money from its parishioners to enable them to operate. Consideration of the minutes of the education committee reveals that much time was spent on financial considerations but time was also spent on the appointment and discipline of schoolmasters and of normal school staff. The committee was also charged with responding to government initiatives, often in the form of written memorials. In addition, the committee involved itself in some surprising micro-management of the normal schools, being concerned, for example, with student behaviour,<sup>2</sup> time-tabling of visiting lectures,<sup>3</sup> and even the ordering of furniture.<sup>4</sup> After discussion in committee, it invariably fell to the secretary to deal with these issues. The position was therefore an extremely

---

<sup>1</sup> PP 1854 LIX, *Census of Great Britain 1851*, 36

<sup>2</sup> Education Committee of the Church of Scotland (ECCS), 15<sup>th</sup> June 1856, Ch1/43/1, NAS

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1856

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1865

important one from the point of view of the Church and at the same time it placed its holder at the centre of events.

Laurie's predecessor as secretary was John Gordon, who was appointed to the post in 1849 and took up his duties formally on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1850, having previously been a government inspector of schools. His appointment is of interest with regard to Laurie's own later appointment because it coincided with a revision of the role. The minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> October 1849 record that, 'it appears to the Sub Committee to be necessary for the welfare of the schools connected with the Church that the duties of Inspector of Schools should be hereafter combined with those of Secretary to the Scheme.'<sup>5</sup> Prior to this, the secretary had not been closely involved with the schools or with the training colleges and would not therefore have had the level of involvement which was later to enable Laurie to have so much practical influence. When Gordon resigned after five years a sub-committee was formed to draw up a 'job description' and find a successor. The new secretary would be expected, among other things, to prepare and mark examination papers for candidates for the normal schools and for the students at the end of session and to superintend the teaching and general efficiency of the training schools. As the minutes put it:

It is essentially necessary that the person appointed to succeed Mr Gordon ... should have an accurate and critical knowledge of the different branches of science and literature on which he has to prepare papers and examine; and it is of much importance that he should have such practical acquaintance with the business of teaching as to be able to say when it is and where it is not successfully carried on, and in what respects it is defective, either in the Training, Normal or Assembly Schools.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, the Church had considerable expectations and it is perhaps remarkable that Laurie, who was only twenty-six years old at the time and who had never taught in a school, nor studied at a normal school let alone worked in one, should have been entrusted with the task. The surviving Church of Scotland records do not include Laurie's application or details of his supporting references. However, they do state that an original field of 12 was reduced to a short list of six and then two and that Laurie was chosen by a vote of 11 to 10.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> ECCS, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1849, CH1/43/1, NAS

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> ECCS, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1855 CH1/43/1, NAS



Given all that was to follow from this particular appointment it is interesting, if unproductive, to reflect on the closeness of the decision.

This appointment placed Laurie at the centre of events at an early age and he was to hold the appointment for fifty years. Fortunately, the Church of Scotland passed all its records on to the National Archives of Scotland and these now contain a complete set of the minutes covering Laurie's term of office and of all the many memorials and submissions which were made to government on the Church's behalf. Laurie was clearly ambitious and little more than a year after being appointed secretary he was also appointed as visitor to the Dick bequest. Originally, this was envisaged as a temporary appointment and the Church was quite happy with this, recording that, 'the Secretary had been requested to undertake the visitation of the Dick bequest schools this year' and furthermore that they were, 'highly gratified that their Secretary should have been selected to discharge so important a duty'.<sup>8</sup> In the event, the appointment became permanent without further evident discussion and there is no subsequent mention of it in the minutes of the education committee.

#### Visitor to the Dick bequest 1856 - 1907

The Trustees of the Dick bequest distributed grants, in accordance with the will of James Dick, in the north east Counties of Scotland. These grants were made to schoolmasters – not to pupils or to school managers – to reward academic achievement in the profession and, in particular, to promote the classics. It is unfortunate that most of the minute books have been lost but the annual reports of the visitor do survive. In addition, it was the custom of the trustees to require, from time to time, a major report on the work of the trust and these were written, and published for public access, in 1835, 1843, 1854, 1865, 1890, and 1904, with Laurie being responsible for the last three.

In order to operate the bequest, the trustees set up a system whereby there would be a treasurer, who would look after everything to do with the financial side of the trust, and a second individual who would be both clerk to the trustees and visitor to the schools,

---

<sup>8</sup> ECCS, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1856 CH1/43/1, NAS

responsible for inspections and for making recommendations for grant recipients and maintaining standards. Allan Menzies was the first clerk and visitor and he was therefore responsible for issuing the first reports and for the first minute book. In 1853, when the then treasurer, Alexander Pearson, died the trustees decided to amalgamate the posts of clerk and treasurer and to seek to appoint a separate visitor. Laurie was not therefore responsible for the production of the minutes which have been lost.

Menzies continued in office until 1854. The trustees then found themselves looking for a successor. This did not prove to be easy. The minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> March 1854 make mention of a verbal report on the search for a visitor but give no details.<sup>9</sup> By 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1855 there is still no progress. Indeed, the minutes of that date hint at difficulties. The committee charged with putting forward names asked the trustees whether there might be circumstances in which they could appoint more than one visitor and were told that this was to be avoided if possible. In the absence of details it is only possible to speculate but perhaps there were otherwise suitable candidates who were reluctant to take on the entire work-load but might have been prepared to do some of it. The committee also asked if they could consider someone who was not a member of the Established Church. They were told that it would be preferable to avoid this but that it was not an absolute barrier.<sup>10</sup> Again, they may have had someone specific in mind when they made this request.

The first mention of Laurie comes in 5<sup>th</sup> March 1856 when there is record of a letter from Menzies recommending him to the trustees. There is no indication of how Menzies knew Laurie or his work but by then Laurie had been secretary to the Church of Scotland education committee for about a year and the clerk to the Dick bequest would certainly have known the secretary to the Church of Scotland education committee, even if only through their mutual contact with schools in the north east. The fact that they both lived in Edinburgh would have made contact between them easy. It is also certain that Menzies both knew and respected Professor Pillans. In his 1854 report he refers to the, 'striking example of an intelligent sympathy exhibited by Professor Pillans in the High School' adding,

---

<sup>9</sup> Dick bequest, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1854, GD1/4/4, NAS

<sup>10</sup> Dick bequest, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1855, GD1/4/4, NAS

‘having himself participated as a pupil in the benefit of the system referred to.’<sup>11</sup> Pillans was something of a mentor to Laurie and it would not be surprising if he had a hand in the recommendation, though there is no specific evidence to that effect. As an added link, Pillans had an involvement with the Dick bequest as an occasional visitor on its behalf. However it may have come about, Menzies did recommend Laurie and Laurie was keen to take on the role. He told Menzies that he was offering himself, subject to the approval of the convener of the education committee. This was forthcoming and Laurie was appointed provisionally, for one year at a salary of £60, the arrangement to be reconsidered if it were to become long term. Although the appointment was to be provisional, there is no record in the Minutes of 1857 of any reconsideration of the arrangement and Laurie retained the position for the next fifty-one years.

At the time of his appointment Laurie was only 27 years old and had never taught in a school (indeed, he never did so) but he did lack neither ambition nor confidence in his abilities. From the very beginning he saw his job as more than merely to report. He wanted to influence what went on in the schools in every particular, clearly seeing himself as more of a director of education than simply as an inspector. He is recorded as referring to, ‘the immense power which the Trustees exercise over the character and tendency of the education of the three counties and through them to a certain extent on the country at large’ and as saying, ‘I could not persuade myself that I sufficiently discharged the duties of their educational representative, if I simply examined and reported on the schools with a view to the just distribution of the fund. It is my desire to feel to a large extent responsible for the character and progress of the schools.’<sup>12</sup>

With Laurie’s appointment, the frequency of visits to the schools was increased from triennial to biennial. In addition he suggested that, ‘occasionally a short visitation (of 6 or 7 days) should be made of those schools most in need of superintendence and advice.’ These were to be in the summer and in addition to the regular visits. He was clearly therefore anxious to be more directly involved with the schools than his predecessor had been and, after being in post for two years, he feels able to report that he, ‘gets a good reception in the

---

<sup>11</sup> A. Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 298

<sup>12</sup> Dick bequest, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1858, GD1/4/4, NAS

vast majority of cases'.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, there are one or two tantalising glimpses of irritation with Laurie and his, possibly overbearing, style.

Laurie produced his first major report, running to over 450 pages, on the work of the bequest, in 1865. This covered essentially the eleven years since the previous major report, though it did also look back briefly over the first twenty-one years of operation. In the preface to that report the trustees wrote, 'It had been intended to produce a simple factual account at this stage.' However, they then felt constrained to add that:

Their views in this respect were afterwards altered in consequence of the strongly expressed wish on the part of Mr. Laurie that either the 'Principles and Theory of Teaching' should be introduced as an additional subject in the examination of new teachers, or that a statement, directing their attention to their importance as a subject of careful study, should be prepared and circulated among schoolmasters generally.

Furthermore, they 'felt themselves constrained' to allow him to prepare a treatise on 'The Theory of Teaching' for circulation among schoolmasters.<sup>14</sup> There is certainly a note of discord here and the trustees go so far as to write, 'while the Second Part brings down the history of the Bequest and its administration for the decennial period, and it is for this Second Part alone that the Trustees hold themselves responsible.'<sup>15</sup> Laurie's account is rather different. 'About two years ago I was asked by the Trustees of the Dick Bequest to put in writing such a statement of the methods of school work as might be of service to teachers admitted to participation in the Bequest.'<sup>16</sup> To be fair to Laurie, in including his ideas on *The Function of the Parochial Schoolmaster, and the Subjects and Methods of his Teaching*, which occupy 206 pages, in his report he was following the example set by Allan Menzies in his 1854 report which had included, at the specific request of the trustees, a 190 page section covering 'the object of education', 'the schoolmaster', 'discipline' and so on as well as chapters on the merit and nature of individual subjects.<sup>17</sup> Laurie may therefore have felt that he was doing no more than discharging his duty but it is impossible not to feel that he leapt enthusiastically at the chance to have a platform for his views on education.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), v - viii

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, viii

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 1

<sup>17</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), v

Although he had published a short book entitled *On the fundamental doctrine of Latin syntax* in 1859, all his major written contributions to educational philosophy still lay in the future. Naturally enough, since the reports were written by Laurie himself, there is little to be gleaned on the way in which the schoolmasters whom he inspected viewed him. The most that can be said is that he is frequently at pains to say that his welcome is good and that he is often gratified to discover on his return visit that his advice has been taken. Nevertheless, human nature being what it is, he cannot always have been a welcome sight as he made his unannounced visits. There is one amusing vignette which hints at the occasional tension. In his Report of 1865, Laurie cites a visit to a particular school, though he does not name it, which he said had declined from 'good' to 'fair' or even 'inferior'. This raised the question of whether the schoolmaster should continue to receive a merit award. Laurie therefore set about inspecting the school in detail. 'Every class was accordingly minutely examined. I kept the master by me, and brought out the results through himself. The process only very slightly annoyed his great good-nature.'<sup>18</sup> If, in circumstances where the schoolmaster knew that he was being inspected with a view to continuing or withholding an allowance, Laurie detected slight annoyance it may be that the man was with some difficulty keeping his temper. In any case, Laurie was evidently very successful as visitor, as evidenced by his long tenure, and he could surely not have achieved this without, in general, having the good relationship with the schools which he claimed.

#### Bell Chair in the Theory, Art and Practice of Education at the University of Edinburgh 1876 - 1903

The third major post which Laurie held in education was that of the Bell Chair in the Theory, Art and Practice of Education at University. He became the first holder of this chair when it was established in 1876. It was, along with the chair at St Andrews, whose first incumbent was Professor J. M. D. Meiklejohn, the first chair of education in a British university, although Joseph Payne had been invited by the College of Preceptors to be their first professor of education three years previously, in 1873, and had accepted. Laurie held this post until his retirement in 1903.

---

<sup>18</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 320

At the time, financial support for new chairs did not come from government and therefore had to be found elsewhere. In the case of the chairs of education, money was provided from the legacy of Dr Andrew Bell. Bell had a lifelong interest in education and published *An Experiment in Education* in 1797. He also left a large sum of money which was used to found Madras College in St Andrews and what is now known as Bell-Baxter High School in Cupar.

However, Bell died in 1832 and was therefore not a participant in the debate over what sort of relationship ought to exist between the training colleges and the universities and about the extent to which future teachers should have at least some exposure to a 'university education'. Laurie himself was always a strong advocate of university education for future teachers. In arguing for this he was in good company. In giving evidence to the Colebrooke Commission, HMI John Kerr said that he had, in two or three reports advocated the union of University and Normal School training, instead of the training they now undergo in the normal school, so that all the good that could be got from the practical training in the normal school could be got in less time, and leave part of the session free for attendance at University.<sup>19</sup>

HMI William Jolly is even clearer in his recommendations. 'To the question, how and where such training should be provided, there can only be one adequate and permanent answer: *It must be done in and by our Universities.*' Jolly then went on to give details of how he envisaged this, including specific mention of the need for a chair of education. Without specifically dealing with the question of chairs of education, Professor Ramsay of Glasgow lends his support to greater university involvement and, at the same time, makes it clear that Laurie was very much in the mainstream, in expressing his opinions. 'As the best system of training for schoolmasters, I would suggest a mixture of Normal School and University training, such as has been suggested by Mr Laurie and by Mr Kerr, and recommended also by Mr Sellar in his educational reports.'<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> PP 1873 XXVII, *First report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into the endowed schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, 75

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 321, 459

Thus it is clear that there was strong, though not universal, support for these ideas. The Free Church in particular expressed grave doubts. At a meeting in 1875 they unanimously adopted:

1. That the establishment of Professorships of Education, for which no public demand has been made, and in connection with the special duties of which no investigation has been instituted, or authoritative explanation given, seems premature and uncalled for.<sup>21</sup>

The reasons behind their opposition were not hard to find. In the first place, change along these lines would inevitably weaken their own influence on the training of teachers. Secondly, and more explicitly stated, they believed that the universities would not be in a position to exercise the necessary moral guidance and control of their students and that it would lead in the end to a secular education system.<sup>22</sup>

By contrast, the minutes of the education committee of the Church of Scotland are silent on this issue until after the establishment of the chairs in 1876 though it is difficult to believe that they would not have shared at least some of the reservations expressed in the Free Church minutes. There is a revealing article in *The Scotsman* of 25<sup>th</sup> May 1875 reporting on the proceedings of the General Assembly of that year. It notes that:

The proposed establishment of Chairs of Education in the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews has been a matter of consideration to the committee, from a fear that the religious teaching of young men training for the profession might not be maintained, and that in the course of time the training colleges supported by the Church might be materially injured by the withdrawal of the male students.

This echoes exactly the reservations expressed by the Free Church as recorded in their minutes. The article also records that:

It was agreed that a joint-deputation should proceed to London, and wait upon the Lord Advocate, the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Lord President of the Council. The members of government assured the deputation that no step would be taken which might prove prejudicial to religious teaching in Scotland, or injurious to the interests of normal schools. Subsequent events have led the committee to believe that care will be taken that the Chairs will not interfere in any way with the normal institutions, but that they will be

---

<sup>21</sup> Free Church Education Committee, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1875, CH3/1429/6, NAS

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

made conducive to the efficiency of these. ... The Chairs will be put on a purely theoretical basis.<sup>23</sup>

The pressures quoted above no doubt helped to ensure that when the Bell Chairs in the 'Theory, History and Art of Education' were established in Edinburgh and St. Andrews in 1876 they were created as part of the 'academic' function of the university with no direct role in the training of teachers. Attendance at lectures in the 'Theory, History and Art of Education' was not required for any trainee teacher, did not count towards graduation and, worst of all, did not attract funding. Thus, when consideration was being given to allowing some training college students to attend some university classes, it was not, even after the creation of the chairs, classes in education which were being contemplated. This tended to make them, if not irrelevant, then at least marginalised.

Although this lack of recognition was to prove to be a source of frustration for Laurie over the succeeding years and although it limited his influence in some respects, it may have been this very fact which made it possible for Laurie to take up his dual role as professor in the university and as secretary to the Church of Scotland education committee. Clearly, there was some discussion within the committee on the subject but, perhaps because Laurie himself was responsible for the minutes, the record of it is brief. The minutes simply state that, 'some conversation having taken place as to the bearing of the new Chair of Education to which Mr Laurie had been appointed in the University on the interests of the Training Colleges and his duties in connexion with them,' it was, 'agreed that he should embody in writing the substance of his explanations.'<sup>24</sup> There is, unfortunately, no record of these 'explanations'. Certainly, Laurie did manage to convince the committee that he could discharge his duties both as its secretary and as professor of education without undue conflict and no further mention is made in the minutes of the subject.

There was, in any case, an extra dimension to the argument about the nature of the new chairs and whether or not the universities should provide training as well as academic lectures and also about whether or not the new courses should count towards the MA for graduation purposes. The establishment of the chairs came about at a time when the whole

---

<sup>23</sup> *The Scotsman*, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1875

<sup>24</sup> ECCS, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1876 CH1/43/3, NAS



question of the proper nature and purpose of universities was being debated. John Stuart Mill had used his inaugural address as rector of St. Andrews university to assert that the university was not ‘a place of professional education’ but others were arguing for a new utilitarianism and Mill’s successor as rector, the historian James Froude, had used the same occasion in 1869 to argue that, ‘the only reasonable guide to choice in such matters was utility’.<sup>25</sup> The debate had led to a report by Professor David Masson of Edinburgh University in 1871 recommending a new degree structure in which five new departments, chemistry and natural sciences, law, history and political economy would be added to the existing classical, philosophical and mathematical groups. However, this was seen as a threat to the classics and was resisted by such men as Principal Grant of Edinburgh University. Consequently, when the chairs in education were established in 1876 the universities still did not accept any course outside what Marjorie Cruickshank describes as the ‘sacred seven’ for the MA degree.<sup>26</sup>

This issue, the debate between the liberal and the utilitarian in university, and indeed in secondary, education was to become the subject of George Davie’s influential books *The Democratic Intellect* and *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect*<sup>27</sup> and it is discussed further in chapter XI.

Thus Laurie, as a result of a combination of circumstances, found himself professor of a subject which attracted no funding, did not qualify for the MA and which, consequently, no-one was actually required to study. As R. D. Anderson put it, ‘the chairs therefore began in 1876 with no obvious function and with inadequate resources’.<sup>28</sup> He had also, however, found a position which entailed frequent, published, lectures on all aspects of education, theoretical, practical and ‘political’, consequently his profile and influence were considerably enhanced.

---

<sup>25</sup> W. Knight (ed.), *Rectorial addresses delivered at the University of St. Andrews*, (London, 1894), 20, 24

<sup>26</sup> M. Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1870).

97

<sup>27</sup> (Edinburgh, 1961), (Edinburgh, 1986)

<sup>28</sup> R. D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland*, (Oxford, 1983), 84

### Possible alternatives

In any long career there are inevitably times when other posts are sought but not secured or opportunities offered but not taken and Laurie was no exception in this regard. Although there may have been more, there are known to have been at least four such instances. Clearly, ‘alternative histories’ can only be at best conjecture but in the context of an inquiry into, among other things, why Laurie has not been better remembered or celebrated by posterity, it is interesting to speculate briefly about what might have been had any of these possibilities come about.

As has been seen, Laurie expressed an interest in a ‘government position’, whilst still a young man acting as a tutor to the Kennedy family. Indeed, he had hoped that Kennedy, an MP and presumably therefore having some influence, would secure one for him. Had he been given one at that stage then, clearly, even if such a position had been in the field of education, his entire working life would have been different and it is impossible to say whether he would have become more or less distinguished.

Knox, writing in the *British Journal of Educational Studies* in 1962, records that, according to Georges Remacle, Laurie was invited in 1869 to become Ralph Lingen’s successor as permanent secretary to the education committee of the Privy Council.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, if this offer was indeed made it was not accepted. By this time, Laurie had served for some fifteen years both as secretary to the education committee of the Church of Scotland and as visitor to the Dick bequest. He had therefore already made his mark on these two institutions. However, much of his important work for these organisations still lay in the future and, had he gone south, he would have had to relinquish both posts. In addition, he had not yet become professor of education at Edinburgh University and since it was in this capacity that he delivered most of his lectures and addresses, many of them subsequently published, it is likely that his legacy in terms of the printed word would have been significantly less had he accepted the offer. He would also not have been in a position to make the same contribution to the place of education as a university subject or to the wider issue of the

---

<sup>29</sup> Knox, Simon Somerville Laurie 1829 – 1909, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 10 No 2, May 1962, 140

training of teachers. He might, of course, have made his mark in a different way but, given that Scottish education came increasingly to be controlled from within Scotland from 1872 onwards, it would not have been likely to have been specifically to Scottish education. In the context of a consideration of Laurie's place in history it is also, in general, safe to say that permanent secretaries, however influential behind the scenes, tend not to be remembered by posterity.

Only two years later Laurie himself expressed an interest in advancement. When John Shairp was promoted in 1871 from his position as professor of humanity at St Andrews University to become principal, Laurie was a candidate to be his successor and his was one of four names put forward to the Duke of Portland in whose gift the Chair was.<sup>30</sup> Again, Laurie had by this time already made a significant contribution to the work of both the Church of Scotland and the Dick bequest and, again, he had not yet been appointed to the chair of education. It seems likely that much of Laurie's most important contribution, to the development of education as a university subject and, consequently, to the training of teachers would have been lost had he been appointed to succeed Shairp.

Finally, Alexander Darroch, Laurie's successor as professor at Edinburgh University, tells us in the entry he wrote for the *Cyclopedia of Education* that Laurie was invited in 1882 by the then president of Columbia University in New York to become the first principal of a new Teachers' College to be funded as part of the university.<sup>31</sup> This, of course, would have meant emigrating and Laurie turned down the offer. Clearly, Laurie must already have had a reputation within educational circles in America for this offer to have been made. Had he accepted it subsequent events would have been very different and in this case, it is possible to speculate that he might indeed have enhanced his reputation. He would certainly have left an important practical legacy. In addition he would already have secured his place in Scottish history as the first holder of the Bell chair in Edinburgh. However, there is no reason to suppose that his ideas or his writing would have been different in character as a consequence of a career in America rather than Scotland and therefore, if his place in

---

<sup>30</sup> University of St. Andrews Senatus Minutes, 16 September 1871; St. Andrews University Library, UY452/19, 138

<sup>31</sup> A. Darroch, 'Laurie, Simon Somerville', *Cyclopedia of Education*, (New York, 1911), Vol III, 653

history rests in an important sense on those ideas, there is no reason to suppose that it would have been significantly different.

It is worth noting that the claims that Laurie was offered first the post of permanent secretary and later that of the first principal of a new teachers' college in New York are both to be found in secondary sources. There is no reason to doubt them but it is unclear, in both cases, exactly how firm the offers were. They may have been direct invitations to take up the posts. On the other hand, it is also possible that they may have been more in the nature of an invitation to put his name forward for serious consideration. It may be that it would be possible to uncover documentary evidence which would clarify this but to do so would require further original research which is outside the scope of this thesis. In any case none of the four alternative possible careers for Laurie did come about and speculation as to how things might have developed if they had must remain just that – speculation.

### Chapter III – Metaphysics and Ethics

Although Laurie continued to write across the full range of his interests, both philosophical and educational, throughout his life, it makes sense to consider his work according to its subject rather than chronologically. His philosophy and his metaphysics are logically prior to everything else he wrote and ought therefore to be considered first. From these directly stemmed his views on ethics and psychology. His ethics in turn lead on to his ideas on the aim and purpose of education and his psychology to the whole field of method. Curriculum content stems from both of these in that it must be chosen to satisfy at least one of the aims of education. Finally, there is a whole range of topics on which Laurie wrote, such as corporal punishment, social mobility and the payment of fees, which relate to the practical implementation of his educational programme. These will be considered in the context of how they were derived from Laurie's ethical ideas.

It is extremely difficult to trace influences on the writing of any philosopher or educationalist. As Laurie himself wrote, 'no man, not even a Milton, however he may ignore the originators of ideas, can keep himself outside the influence of the ideas themselves if they be in the air.'<sup>1</sup> The possible influences on Laurie must have included the work of all those philosophers with whose work it can be deduced that he was familiar, either because he commented directly on them or because it would have been included in a corpus of work about which he could not have been unaware.

By writing *John Amos Comenius, Bishop of the Moravians. His life and educational works*,<sup>2</sup> *Lectures on the rise and early constitution of universities with a survey of mediaeval education AD 200-1350*,<sup>3</sup> *Historical survey of pre-Christian education*<sup>4</sup> and

---

<sup>1</sup> Laurie, *Studies in the History of Educational Opinion Since the Renaissance*, (Cambridge, 1903), 160

<sup>2</sup> (Cambridge, 1881)

<sup>3</sup> (London, 1886)

<sup>4</sup> (London, 1895)

*Studies in the history of educational opinion from the Renaissance*<sup>5</sup> Laurie makes it clear that he was extremely well read in educational philosophy and history. In the course of his writing he refers to a number of his contemporaries and, given the obvious breadth of his reading it is virtually inconceivable that there should have been any major figures with whose work he was not familiar – even when he does not refer to them specifically.

The second possible source of known influence would have included men whom Laurie knew personally. Because of the regrettable absence of any significant number of letters, this group is actually very small but it would have included William Hamilton, whose lectures Laurie attended, James Pillans, whose assistant he became and George Combe, the noted phrenologist and the only one of Laurie's regular correspondents whose letters survive.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, many of the ideas which were 'in the air' were those of German philosophers such as Hegel, Kant and Fichte, to each of whom he refers, with varying degrees of approval. Laurie included German as one of, 'the branches of knowledge which I am prepared to teach thoroughly and in which I am prepared to stand an examination by persons acknowledged to be masters of them'.<sup>6</sup> It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that he will have read the work of these men in the original.

### Philosophy

Although a full analysis of Laurie's philosophical work is outside the scope of this enquiry it does form the intellectual background against which everything else is set and is therefore worthy of some consideration not least since Laurie himself stressed throughout his life that a study of philosophy, and not just the philosophy of education, was essential for the good teacher. 'Without philosophy, the best teacher is merely a clever craftsman.'<sup>7</sup> The context makes it clear that Laurie believed that teachers ought to study the work of philosophers through the ages and that any individual teacher ought to have his or her own

---

<sup>5</sup> (Cambridge, 1903)

<sup>6</sup> Laurie to George Combe, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1854, vol 7342, 54, NLS

<sup>7</sup> Laurie, 'The Schoolmaster and University (Day) Training Colleges in England', *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 87

ideas on the ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘to whom’ of teaching. Laurie, studying at Edinburgh University during the second half of the 1840’s and writing throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the first decade of the twentieth, might have been expected to fit in with the major trends of Scottish philosophy during that period but it would be inaccurate to say that he did.

There is always the temptation when considering where philosophers should be placed with regard to different schools of thought to overstate the arguments in order to classify them as belonging to one rather than another. In many cases, and certainly in Laurie’s, such classification merely results in oversimplification. Bertrand Russell wrote of Locke, ‘No one has succeeded in inventing a philosophy which is at once credible and self-consistent. Locke aimed at credible and achieved it at the expense of consistency. Most of the great philosophers have done the opposite.’<sup>8</sup> Laurie would have been much more likely to follow Locke’s example than to pursue an idea too far.

That said, Laurie is more easily placed within the ‘Scottish Common Sense School’ which Professor Graham argues began to decline after the publication in 1846 of Thomas Reid’s *Collected Works* by Sir William Hamilton, then Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh University, (Professor Graham is not arguing cause and effect here) rather than in the School of Scottish Idealists which succeeded it, and to which most of his contemporaries belonged.<sup>9</sup> Indeed Laurie places himself firmly in this camp when he writes, ‘Matter is not Mind and Mind is not Matter. I stand by this dualism.’<sup>10</sup> and even more specifically:

I shall conclude by quoting, from the sober philosopher of Common Sense, a sentence which expresses a “scientific” phenomenal truth of more certitude than the existence of the sun as an objective reality: I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling; I am something that thinks and acts and feels.<sup>11,12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> B. Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, (London, 1984), 592

<sup>9</sup> G. Graham, *Lecture at Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milan, 2002* (Vita Pensiero – Pubblicazione dell’ Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, 2003)

<sup>10</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 253

<sup>11</sup> T. Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man Vol I*, (Dublin, 1790), 378

<sup>12</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 259

It is tempting to describe Laurie as being a man of ‘common sense’ but potentially confusing in this particular context. The term ‘common sense’ as used to describe the school of philosophy refers not to the nature of the ideas but to the assertion that there is an innate sense, common to all, which enables us to know the external world. This sense is there in the learned and the vulgar alike and this has important implications for education, and in particular for who should be educated and to what level.

There is a direct line from Thomas Reid, the most significant writer of the Common Sense School, through Hamilton, to Laurie himself. Reid’s work was a reaction against the scepticism which followed from Hume’s views on perception and on how much we can know of the external world, indeed whether there is an objectively knowable external world. For Reid and his followers, it was not that Hume was necessarily wrong but that he had pushed philosophy further than it could go. ‘Wise men now agree, or ought to agree in this, that there is but one way to the knowledge of nature’s works; the way of observation and experiment.’<sup>13</sup> This is entirely in accordance with Hume but, taken to extremes, this approach would lead to the position of Bishop Berkeley who, ‘proved by unanswerable arguments what no man in his sense could believe’.<sup>14</sup>

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries any number of men, clearly in their senses, did indeed believe in an idealist philosophy which denied the possibility of knowledge of an external material world. This simply seemed to go against common sense – here the expression is used in its more familiar everyday meaning - for philosophers such as Reid, Hamilton and Laurie. They argued a dualist position whereby humankind is endowed with a faculty of perception and understanding which enables us to ‘get at’ what is ‘obviously’ there. ‘If our powers of perception be not altogether fallacious, the objects we perceive are not in our brain, but without us.’<sup>15</sup> Contemporaries of Laurie, such as Edward Caird (1835-1905), Alexander Bain (1818-1903) and the slightly later Andrew Seth Pringle Pattison (1856-1931) reacted against the Common Sense School and developed the Scottish Idealist School, influenced significantly by the German philosophers, in particular Hegel. Laurie did not belong in this group, though this is not to say that they had no influence on him as

---

<sup>13</sup> Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, (Edinburgh, 1764), 3

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 24

<sup>15</sup> Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man Vol 1*, (Dublin, 1790), 117



may perhaps be seen when considering his psychology of learning. Laurie's major metaphysical work, published in 1884, was even subtitled 'A return to Dualism'. The return is not Laurie's – he had never been away – but rather a reference to the Idealist School which Laurie thought was on the wrong track. Having said that, *The Scotsman*, in a review of a book by Georges Remacle on Laurie says:

Remacle hints that Laurie did himself a disservice by titling his book 'A Return to Dualism or to the natural realism of common sense and the Scottish Philosophy'. Laurie is a realist in so far as he is the foe of subjective idealism. ... In his absolute respect for the 'Given' Laurie refuses to separate the subject arbitrarily and artificially from the object.<sup>16</sup>

For Laurie the existence of the external world was a given and what was interesting was how we receive information about it and how we process that information. His answer was to coin the term 'attentions'. 'The "attentive stage" is the state of mind reached by the highest animals whereby they are able to sense a total object.'<sup>17</sup> For Laurie, this is a passive process. We are endowed with a faculty which enables us to register these attentions but in order to 'do anything with them' we need a further faculty. In this he is very like Johann Herbart, writing in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century. There are interesting parallels between Herbart and Laurie, although Laurie does not acknowledge these. In fact, he refers to Herbart only three times in the text of *Institutes of Education*. Once with reference to the psychology of learning,<sup>18</sup> once to agree with Herbart on the need for pupils to be given self-respect,<sup>19</sup> and in a footnote on the philosophy of mind in which he cites De Garmo's *Herbart and the Herbartians*.<sup>20</sup> Given the similarities, though there were also differences, it is difficult to believe that Herbart was not an influence on Laurie.

Johann Herbart was born in 1776 and died in 1841. Like Laurie, he aspired to be a serious philosopher but, while he did become professor of philosophy at Königsberg University, he was ultimately disappointed in his ambition to be seen as the natural successor to Kant and Hegel, not in terms of their views but of their stature. Like Laurie, Herbart worked as a young man as a private tutor. During this period he developed an increasing interest in

---

<sup>16</sup> *The Scotsman*, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1909

<sup>17</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 74

<sup>18</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 249

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 375

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 211

education and wrote his *Letters*. It would be impossible to say in either case, whether it was the interest in education which led to becoming a tutor or the other way round. No doubt there was an element of influence in both directions. There is one further interesting parallel which can be drawn between Herbart and Laurie. Although Herbart undeniably attracted a greater following during the nineteenth century, he too was destined to fade into comparative obscurity. The British Library catalogue lists only one book on Herbart written in English after 1910. This was *Herbart and Herbartianism*<sup>21</sup> by H. B. Dunkel and he starts by saying:

Oblivion has engulfed Herbart with unusual speed. ... The man often called the 'father of the scientific study of education' has become almost unknown during the very period when the scientific study of education has been proliferating in universities and normal schools throughout the civilized world.<sup>22</sup>

### Metaphysics

Both Herbart and Laurie were realists. Herbart's idea was that we gain our knowledge of the external world through 'presentations'. These presentations accumulate in the mind to become an 'apperception mass'. Thus for both Herbart and Laurie, the initial stage was passive. Both however wished to move on from this basic starting point. Herbart developed his idea of what were essentially qualities within the apperception masses themselves which rendered ideas either attractive or repellent to each other. This has profound importance for Herbartian theorists when it comes to the psychology of learning and to the proper content for a successful curriculum.

Laurie, by contrast, asserts that we have 'will-reason'. This will-reason acts upon the attunitions and it is this faculty which, he believed, makes it possible for us to live a non-determinist ethical life. It is more than a faculty of understanding, though that is included, and more than just the exercise of will in the pursuit of immediate gratification or happiness. Laurie goes further than this; he asserts that everything contains within it both 'notion' and 'idea'. The notion contains all the attributes of a thing and the idea is 'what it is for'. The idea is contained within the notion and it is this which sets it apart from

---

<sup>21</sup> H. B. Dunkel, *Herbart and Herbartianism*, (Chicago, 1970)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 3,4

everything else and makes it what it is and not other. It also, says Laurie, gives it purpose in that the ethical life consists in the realisation of this 'idea'.<sup>23</sup>

Laurie also asserts that the idea for man consists in the faculty of will-reason, which the rest of the animal kingdom does not have. Thus what we must do first is to exercise will-reason to establish which of our characteristics set us apart from other animals. These he describes as 'defining characteristics'. We must then actually behave in such a way as to realise them. Finally, he says that when we achieve this we will experience an 'inner harmony', which is, in effect, how we are to know that we have reasoned and acted aright. A complete study of Laurie's ideas might well raise the question of the extent to which his idea of a feeling of 'harmony' corresponded to Herbart's idea that some ideas 'attracted' each other. How else would it be possible to discern this 'attraction' if not through something akin to a feeling of 'harmony'?

The place of philosophy in education, for both Laurie and Herbart, is considered more fully in the second half of this chapter. At this stage, however, it is necessary to move from Laurie's ontology and epistemology to his ethics, which have a much greater bearing on his educational thought.

### Ethics

Laurie's principal work on ethics was entitled, simply, *Ethica*<sup>24</sup> which first appeared in 1885. Prior to that, he had published *The Philosophy of Ethics*<sup>25</sup> in 1866 and *Notes Expository and Critical on Certain British Theories of Morals*<sup>26</sup> in 1868. In the second of these two volumes, Laurie commented on the debate, which had occupied ethical thinkers for some one hundred and fifty years, between those who, like Hutcheson and Butler, argued that the principles of moral action are to be divined through an innate faculty, sometimes called conscience, and those who, like Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Alexander Bain, espoused some form of utilitarianism. Hutcheson thought that, 'the

---

<sup>23</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), Lecture II, 113

<sup>24</sup> (Edinburgh, 1885)

<sup>25</sup> (Edinburgh, 1866)

<sup>26</sup> (Edinburgh, 1868)

Almighty had given us strong affections to be the springs of Virtues, and made Virtue herself “a lovely form, that we might easily distinguish it from its contrary”.<sup>27</sup> and Bishop Butler, ‘escaped Selfism on the one side, and Utilitarianism on the other, by placing the source and authority of the Right in the arbitrary dicta of Conscience, and by showing that the highest end of action was conformity to Duty, on which happiness was only an attendant.’<sup>28</sup> The utilitarians, on the other hand, were distinguished by the fact that they believed that the moral value of an action was to be discerned by consideration, not of motive, but of effect. Laurie aligned himself with the former group. In *Ethica*, he states categorically that ‘man lives to fulfil himself, to develop in activity all his powers, and this in their most excellent activity.’ and again, ‘Now, the “good” of a thing is the End of that thing and the End is the “good” for it.’ He further feels able to claim that, ‘No-one I suppose doubts that the ethical life for each man in his striving for self-realisation is such a life as shall promote the development of human capacities and possibilities, and so further the “Good” for himself and the race.’<sup>29</sup>

Given the extent of Laurie's reading and knowledge of other thinkers, as evidenced by the commentaries he was able to write, this latter assertion is astonishing. Clearly, he will have known perfectly well that any number of eminent thinkers would have doubted his claims. It is significant that these statements should appear at the very beginning of his most important work on ethics, the one in which, rather than comment on others, Laurie is setting out his own views. All those who choose to write on ethics must make a start somewhere and they must establish the foundations on which all else rests – and these are Laurie's. Perhaps the most revealing phrase in the quotations cited above is ‘and this in their most excellent activity’. The bald assertion that man exists to fulfil his powers cannot of itself yield an ethical system by which different actions are to be measured. Individual men and women, have any number of ‘powers’, some of which can be argued to be ‘good’ and others either ‘bad’ or not to be evaluated on a moral scale. By introducing the word ‘excellent’ Laurie, perhaps inadvertently, is acknowledging this fact and ought, strictly speaking, to have provided a prior basis on which to do so. However, it can also be argued

---

<sup>27</sup> Laurie, *Notes Expository and Critical on Certain British Theories of Morals*, (Edinburgh 1868), 26

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 56

<sup>29</sup> Laurie, *Ethica*, (Edinburgh, 1891), 13, 18

that such a requirement would lead to an infinite regression. For this reason, it can also be argued that all writers on ethics must base their thought on one or more axioms which cannot be proved and which, if progress is to be made, must simply be accepted. It is, nevertheless, worth identifying these axioms, if only in order to be fully aware of them.

Laurie states categorically that it is will-reason which separates man from the other animals. But is it possible to be sure that animals cannot exercise will-reason? There have been many studies, admittedly since Laurie's day, which demonstrate that primates and some birds can acquire or even make tools with which to achieve some end or other, for example, finding food or building a nest. The ability to carry out these tasks argues the pursuit of a proximate aim on the way to enabling the achievement of a subsequent, more important, one. This in turn suggests the existence of a capacity to work out a strategy and to implement it, which would seem to encapsulate the essence of will-reason. Even given that these studies were not available to Laurie, casual observation of animal behaviour, including that of domestic pets, might have suggested at least a strong possibility that some animals can reason and can make decisions. If they can, then either they too can live an ethical life or Laurie needs to find an alternative definition. This is not to say that no such alternative could be found, even from Laurie's own starting point, just that he did not propound one.

It is also legitimate to ask whether it is quite as self-evident as Laurie claimed to suggest that living the ethical life consists in realising defining characteristics. There have been many philosophers whose ethical theories could not be summed up in this way. But even if Laurie's statement is accepted as it stands there remains the problem of selecting those defining characteristics which ought to be realised.

Laurie started from the basic assertion that man exists to realise his potential as a human being and from a belief in God and a belief that there must be a purpose to our existence. These claims were simply not to be questioned; the only alternative to belief in purpose is a nihilistic pointless existence which, for Laurie, was a non-starter. But suppose, for the sake of moving the argument on, that it is will-reason which sets man apart from the other animals, and further that the ethical life does indeed exist in the realisation of defining

characteristics through the exercise of will-reason, the question then becomes, ‘What counts as a “defining characteristic”?’

Laurie would consider characteristics to be relevant to the ethical life where it is possible to exercise ‘will-reason’ in respect of them. He was not a determinist; for him, we are in control of our actions and can choose which courses of action to follow and which faculties to develop. It is these choices, rather than the outcome of our actions, which create the possibility of moral value.

It would be possible to divide potentially defining characteristics and resultant actions into three categories. Firstly there are those actions over which it cannot meaningfully be asserted that man exercises will-reason. For example, it is a defining characteristic of mammals, though not exclusively of mammals, that they breathe oxygen. Laurie would not have regarded this as falling within the ethical sphere (except in so far as he would, surely, have disapproved of suicide, though he did not comment on it specifically) because it is not possible to choose not to breathe and to continue to be an (alive) animal. Secondly, there are actions which logically Laurie would have had to consider as falling within the ethical sphere but trivially so. It is a defining characteristic of man that he should walk upright and it would be perfectly possible to choose not to walk upright. Indeed, we all do so from time to time – playing with our children, crawling into small spaces and so on. Although Laurie did not comment on this kind of behaviour specifically, his likely response would have been to have said that to fail to walk upright would be to deny human potential and that that in itself would be morally wrong. However, since we are not really tempted to deny potential in this particular way, it is not an area which merits much attention. But this, in turn opens up a new line of enquiry. The capacity to walk upright may be a defining characteristic but it is also an instinct and other characteristics, notably the ability to reason itself, are also instincts. Can it make sense to ascribe moral value to behaviour which is in accordance with instinct? Or, perhaps, only to behaviour which requires resistance to instinct? This is an immense subject and not one for discussion here but it serves to illustrate the complexity of the issue and the fact that Laurie could not, any more than his contemporaries with different ideas, be said to have had all the answers.

Thirdly, there are all the rest of the actions which we can choose to do or not to do as a result of the way we exercise our will-reason. The guiding principle is that actions are ethical if and only if they tend to promote the development of our potential as humans. This inevitably brings Laurie up against the problem which has always confronted ethical thinkers. On what basis are potential activities to be categorised as ‘good’ or ‘bad’? A simple appeal to the ‘development of potential’ will not do. There exist within man as a species and within individual men and women many potentialities. Obviously, there is the potential within humans for laziness, cruelty and so on. There is also the potential for generosity and kindness. Somehow judgements have to be made.

In the end, Laurie goes back to his notion of the exercise of will-reason on intuitions – effectively that which reaches us through the senses – in order to bring about self-realisation, arguing that we have within us the capacity to distinguish between good and bad actions. To explain this, Laurie introduces the concept of ‘harmony’ which he describes as the ‘necessary predicate of self-realisation or the Good.’ Thus, ‘the feeling of harmony is ... the criterion of the ethical life – of the attainment of the good.’<sup>30</sup> Since man is to know what constitutes the ‘good’ by means of a ‘feeling’ over which he cannot exercise control, Laurie can here be taken to mean something very like conscience. Laurie develops this concept into an elaborate formulation of what he calls the ‘law’ for the ethical life, always founded on harmony.

Ultimately, his argument is circular in that harmony and the law are to be found by self-realisation in pursuit of the good and the good is to be defined as that which, when pursued, leads to harmony. In one sense, this circularity is unimportant. It can be argued that all moralists face the same problem and Laurie is in good company. To be fair to Laurie, he himself was well aware of the problem. ‘The attempt to name by one word the supreme end or “chief good” of man has been a conspicuous failure, partly because the word or phrase chosen is presumed to fix a criterion while furnishing an end.’<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 42

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 284

What is of crucial importance is the fact that, for Laurie, the ‘good’ is to be defined in terms of an individual ‘end’ in life as opposed to a social one. This has profound implications for his educational philosophy. The contrast with the utilitarians and the radicals of Laurie’s time, such as Mill and Spencer, is a theme which will recur when questions of who should be educated and to what level and of liberal education as against scientific or technical are considered.

The defining difference between this and the utilitarian idea is that, for Laurie and those who thought like him, acting aright was essentially for the ‘good’ of the individual; for the utilitarians, acting aright was for the collective ‘good’ of all individuals, in other words, for society. The two schools of moralists can be summed up by saying that those who thought like Laurie were arguing that the principal factor in determining the worth of an action was subjective, consisting in the exercise of will-reason and the consequent decision to act in this way rather than that one, whereas the utilitarians were arguing that the worth of an action is determined by its outcome. Here, the axiom laid down by the utilitarians is that ‘happiness’ is a ‘good’ for humans, as opposed to simply being, by definition, enjoyable. Laurie himself made this point when he wrote, ‘Utilitarians ... have been blind to the fact that universal happiness is itself formal and empty and that it proceeds on a presupposition as to what happiness is.’<sup>32</sup>

As with his ideas on metaphysics, Laurie’s ethical views are consistent with the Scottish Common Sense School of thought and they sit comfortably with those of Thomas Reid. ‘Some first principles of morals must be immediately discerned, otherwise we have no foundation on which others can rest, or from which we can reason.’<sup>33</sup> and again, ‘The man who acts according to the dictates of his conscience, and takes due pains to be rightly informed of his duty, is a perfect man with regard to his morals ... whatever may be the imperfection or errors of his understanding.’<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, collected by William Hamilton, (Edinburgh, 1853), 480

<sup>34</sup> Ibid



There is also a resonance in Laurie's ideas with Christian teaching in the New Testament as described in the parable of the talents. Laurie, of course, was a member and an employee of the Established Church and, in part at least, the development of the Common Sense school of thought, to which he belonged, was a defence against the atheism which many saw as being the inevitable consequence of the ideas of Hume. Again the important element in the parable of the talents is that it focuses on the individual, rather than on 'society' and, given Laurie's background, it is in no way surprising that his ideas should have conformed to this principle. In fact, he acknowledged explicitly the debt his ethical thinking owed to the New Testament in a lecture he gave on the ideas of Herbert Spencer when he said, 'The true life is, for each, simply the completion of himself as a man. ... This, I submit is the true doctrine. ... It is also, substantially at least, the doctrine of Plato, Aristotle, and the New Testament.'<sup>35</sup>

This is, necessarily, a somewhat simplistic view of the debate and is probably in some ways unfair to Laurie. However, what can be said with a degree of certainty is that his work on philosophy was never regarded as particularly important within philosophical circles. Laurie did attract one disciple, Georges Remacle, who translated *Ethica*<sup>36</sup> and *Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta*<sup>37</sup> into French and also wrote *La Philosophie de S. S. Laurie*,<sup>38</sup> which is an exposition of Laurie's philosophy, mainly as it appears in *Synthetica*. However, apart from Remacle and reviews at the time of publication, Laurie's philosophical work did not receive serious consideration and modern commentaries on Scottish philosophy of the nineteenth century do not tend to mention him at all. Certainly, the most recent of these, Alexander Broadie's *A History of Scottish Philosophy*,<sup>39</sup> does not do so. Consequently, Laurie cannot be argued to have been influential simply as a philosopher. However, all thinkers who also have a desire to contribute in the practical sphere must at some point move on from their theorising – whether or not all the questions which have arisen have been satisfactorily answered. Laurie derived his educational philosophy directly from his ethics and it is this which must now be considered and perhaps the last word on this section may be left with a

---

<sup>35</sup> Laurie, 'Lecture to the Education Class 1892', *The Scotsman*, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1892

<sup>36</sup> (Tournai, 1902)

<sup>37</sup> (Tournai, 1901)

<sup>38</sup> (Brussels, 1909)

<sup>39</sup> (Edinburgh, 2009)

review by Andrew Seth which appeared in *Mind*, October 1884, of *Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta*. 'The author's knowledge and use of German thought is flavoured by a certain sturdy Scotch independence as well as by the infusion of Scotch caution. ... What is said by the author is said with admirable clearness.'<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> *Mind*, October 1884, Vol IX, No 36, 574

## Chapter IV - Educational Philosophy

The concept of 'educational philosophy' is a wide one. It has its roots in both ethics and psychology. This chapter will, therefore, consider Laurie's educational philosophy in the context of his ethics. This necessarily includes consideration of his ideas on the social purposes of education and, consequently, on who should be educated and to what level. Questions relating to the process of learning and on the proper content of the ideal curriculum will be dealt with subsequently.

### The ethical basis of Laurie's educational philosophy – the 'why' of education

Why should we educate our children? It is the most basic question, yet the possible answers to it reveal the most significant of splits between educational theorists. These answers divide neatly into two broad camps exactly as did the questions of ethics. There, the issue was whether the rightness of actions was to be judged essentially by motive or outcome. In education, the issue is whether children ought to be educated in order to become something or in order to be able to do something. Is education for the individual or is it for society? It was not a new question even at the time of the emergence of utilitarianism as a coherent philosophy. Plato argued that the purpose of education was to enable the best minds to 'ascend to the vision of the Good'<sup>1</sup> whilst it was Aristotle's view that, 'even if the good of the community coincides with that of the individual, it is clearly a greater and more perfect thing to achieve and preserve that of a community'.<sup>2</sup>

In comparing the respective attitudes of the Ancient Greeks and Romans to education, Laurie asserted that, 'In Greece life was the aim; in Rome the duties of life.'<sup>3</sup> Nor could there be any doubt where his sympathies lay. In writing of the Romans he said, 'In all things there was a Roman practical aim, while in all subjects, save literature and what bore

---

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Republic*, tr. H. D. P. Lee, (Penguin, 1955), 284

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, tr. J. A. K. Thomson, (Penguin, 1953), 64

<sup>3</sup> Laurie, Lecture to the Edinburgh Philomathic Society, *The Scotsman*, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 1878

directly on the full understanding of the poets, the Roman was superficial and utilitarian. Might we not say superficial *because* utilitarian.’<sup>4</sup>

Laurie was unequivocal in his statements of his educational philosophy. ‘I would myself prefer to say that the ideal aim of education is the realisation of the ideal of man by each individual in and for himself.’<sup>5</sup> This is a direct re-statement of his understanding of the ethical life for man. Thus, for Laurie, in education, as in life in general, the aim is always individual rather than collective. This is a position which Laurie maintained consistently throughout his life. *Institutes of Education*, from which the first quotation was taken, was first published in 1892 but he made very much the same point in his inaugural address in 1876 when he said, ‘The aim of the educationalist is not the giving of information, nay not even instruction, though this is essential, but mainly discipline ... to make it possible ... to realise in and for himself ... humanity.’<sup>6</sup>

However, the categorisation of educational aims as either individually or societally based is, while useful, simplistic. Those who would assert, with Quintilian, Locke and Spencer, that the aim of education is to be found in some form of utilitarian measurement of outcome must at some point address the question of the possibility of right action for its own sake. On the other hand, those who, like Laurie and Herbart, believed that the aim of education was to be found in individual fulfilment in some way or other must at some point move on from that basic position and explain how individual action relates to society and, in Laurie's case in particular, how man, as a social animal, could ‘realise himself’ except through his behaviour in a society.

Laurie understood this. At one point he defines education as, ‘The means which a nation takes for bringing up its citizens to maintain the tradition of national character and for promoting the welfare of the whole as an organised ethical community’.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, again and again he returns to his basic belief that the aim of education is to enable self-

---

<sup>4</sup> Laurie, *Historical Survey of Pre-Christian Education*, (London, 1900), 340

<sup>5</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 16

<sup>6</sup> Laurie, ‘The Teaching Profession and Chairs of Education’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 22

<sup>7</sup> Laurie, *Historical Survey of pre-Christian Education*, (London, 1895), 2

realisation. There are other aims but they are always secondary and must always be justified in terms of this primary aim.

It would be impossible to determine precisely which of Laurie's predecessors as thinkers and writers on education influenced him. In a practical sense it seems likely that many of his ideas can be traced to a greater or lesser extent to those of Comenius. He did, after all, write a book on Comenius.<sup>8</sup> But he also wrote a *Historical survey of pre-Christian education*<sup>9</sup> and *Studies in the history of educational opinion from the Renaissance*.<sup>10</sup> When considering what his predecessors said on the subject of aim he is, naturally, more sympathetic to those who advanced theories which were based primarily on the individual, rather than those who put forward some version of utilitarianism in education. That term, of course, though not the ideas it represented, was anachronistic in relation to the earliest thinkers. That said, it is interesting to note how generous Laurie was in his comments on the second group.

The leading Roman educationist, arguably the first true educationist, as opposed to philosopher with the occasional foray into educational matters, was Quintilian. In his view, education aimed to produce the 'good orator' and contained within that concept were questions of knowledge, political awareness, rhetorical competence and so on. There is no question but that Quintilian, in true Roman fashion, sought to produce men who would be able to serve society but he argued that, 'The perfect orator must be a man of integrity, a good man, otherwise he cannot pretend to that character.'<sup>11</sup> This enabled Laurie to write, 'The significant thing for us to note as students of education is that Quintilian, like all competent thinkers on this subject, aimed at a moral result as the supreme end.'<sup>12</sup>

This even-handed treatment on Laurie's part continues even when he comes to deal with arch 'utilitarians' such as John Locke and Spencer. Of Locke he can say:

---

<sup>8</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1884)

<sup>9</sup> (London, 1895)

<sup>10</sup> (London, 1903)

<sup>11</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, tr. H. E. Butler, (London, 1921), introd.

<sup>12</sup> Laurie, *Historical Survey of Pre-Christian Education*, (London, 1895), 82

If, however, what we understand Locke to mean by education is the bringing up of a human being so as to fit him for ordinary citizenship, and make him a respectable member of society and a satisfactory representative of the moral standard and social consensus of his time, he is unquestionably right.<sup>13</sup>

And of Spencer he can say, 'We believe every thoughtful educator will accept Mr. Spencer's reasonings as far as they go. Idealists and realists must meet here.'<sup>14</sup> It is characteristic of Laurie that he should not have dismissed the utilitarian view, and all that flows from it, as simply wrong. Rather he asserted that it is essentially superficial and incomplete.

Laurie describes Milton's aim as being, 'Likeness to God, best attained through Virtue and Faith, Comenius' as 'Knowledge, Virtue, Religion' and Elyot and Bacon's as 'Character'.<sup>15</sup> All of these formulations of the 'aim in education' are compatible with, though not identical to, Laurie's and any or all of them may have influenced his thinking. However, it is between Herbart and Laurie that the greatest similarities are to be found. Again, it is interesting that Laurie does not mention Herbart in this context. Nevertheless, both Herbart and Laurie seem to have evolved their educational philosophies in essentially the same way. They both made a point early on in their respective writing of emphasising the importance of philosophy as the necessary foundation for all good education. As Herbart puts it, 'Nowhere is the philosophic breadth of vision so necessary as in teaching.'<sup>16</sup> while Laurie states that, 'It (philosophy) transforms him from a tradesman into a member of a profession and nothing else can do so.'<sup>17</sup> Herbart states unequivocally that 'The one and whole work of education is morality.'<sup>18</sup> and Laurie says the same thing in his assertion that, 'The very purpose of all education is to strengthen the ethical in the individual.'<sup>19</sup>

Thus it is quite clear that Laurie rejected the ideas of the utilitarians in education, as he did in ethics. Education was for the individual rather than for society. By extension, the proper

---

<sup>13</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 1,2

<sup>14</sup> Laurie, *Historical Survey of Pre-Christian Education*, (London, 1895), 84

<sup>15</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 16

<sup>16</sup> Herbart, *Letters and Lectures*, tr. Felkin, (New York, 1898), 9

<sup>17</sup> Laurie, 'The Philosophy of Education in Relation to the School and the Teacher', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 66

<sup>18</sup> J. Herbart, *The Science of Education*, tr. Felkin, (London, 1897), 57

<sup>19</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1892), 126

content of education would be those things which promoted the self-realisation of the individual. It followed from this that a 'liberal education' which sought to promote this end, rather than a 'technical education' with its emphasis on preparation for life as an adult in society and for fitness for some particular occupation, must form the core of any good curriculum. Before considering appropriate content of such a curriculum, it is important to consider at whom it should be directed.

### Whom to educate? - philosophy

There can, in terms of Laurie's own philosophy, be only one answer to the fundamental question of whom to educate – everyone. He was at pains to point out at every turn that each individual must strive for self-realisation and that the enabling of this is the proper aim of education. Any questions of usefulness to society or fitness for a later occupation are secondary. It follows from this that all individuals must have an equal right to the opportunity for self-realisation. Laurie never claims originality for this idea. On the contrary, he implies that he is simply restating a fundamental truth which had long been recognised. As he puts it, 'Man as man, man for the sake of man, not for his skill in doing this or that – this is, since the days of Plato and Christ, the aim of the educator.'<sup>20</sup> Laurie felt that he could claim that 'education was not in earliest times possible' because true education entails a process of self-awareness, an understanding of the 'notion' for man, which was not possible without philosophical thought and he believed that philosophy began with the Greeks. It is instructive to note that he did not mean by this that the Greeks invented education itself. 'Do not suppose that education was invented either by the Greek or the Christian. It has always been going on. Every child, always, at all times, and in all places, is being educated – trained up to something or other which constitutes the type for his time, his place, his class.'<sup>21</sup>

This apparent contradiction, between saying that education had not been possible and that it had always been going on, was in fact a useful device for underscoring his central point that education is for the individual, while allowing him to acknowledge that it must take place

---

<sup>20</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 10

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 14, 10

in a social context. Thus he goes on to say, 'Were we now, in these modern times, to educate a man merely with a view to the adaptation of his powers to certain finite uses (industries and the like), we should be recurring to the education of *primaeval* civilisation.' The key word here is 'merely' and from this point on Laurie can talk, as he does, about educating children to be able to contribute to society and about the need to teach technical skills as legitimate aims, provided always that they are seen as subordinate aims. This is best summed up by two separate quotations. The first argues that even apparently purely technical skills have within them a moral dimension:

The ethical enters into everything. This universality would itself suffice to show that it is supreme. Even in the technical education of a carpenter or weaver, I am fitting him to do his work better than he would otherwise do it – that is to say, more effectively, and therefore more honestly. ... The most efficient carpenter is, *qua* carpentering, the most moral carpenter. ... Even technical instruction has then, its moral purpose: it fits a man to be a true man in the social place he occupies.<sup>22</sup>

The second quotation counsels against the urge to weight education too heavily in the direction of technical instruction. When referring to supplementary courses, introduced in 1903 to provide a vocational element particularly for those who were required to remain at school between the ages of 12 and 14 but who would not be going on to secondary education, Laurie said that they were 'the greatest of all educational heresies' and that, 'The introducing of young unformed minds prematurely to future occupations of life, makes the vital mistake of supposing that they prepared the future ploughman and artisan best for their daily tasks by anticipating those tasks in the school.'<sup>23</sup> The business of educators was to occupy the children before they embarked on the sordid cares of existence with subjects that expanded the mind, touched the heart, and enlarged the moral interests, while at the same time introducing them to instruction which disciplined the intellect for all occupations alike and gave each a chance of rising in the social scale.<sup>24</sup>

This theme will recur when consideration is given to Laurie's views on the proper content of a school curriculum. But first Laurie's ideas on education for all must be put into the context of his time. Laurie was brought up in the Scottish tradition of a 'school in every

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 12, 17

<sup>23</sup> Address to the Edinburgh Local Association of the EIS, 1903, EH7/1/21, NAS

<sup>24</sup> Ibid



parish'. Not only that, he believed that it was important that these parish schools should be able to teach able boys to the level required for entry to university, without the need to go somewhere in between. Of course, the idea of 'a school in every parish' is not necessarily the same as saying that everyone should be educated, or at least not everyone to the same level. Nevertheless, Laurie would certainly have endorsed the ringing tones of the *First Book Of Discipline*, that all must be 'nourischit and brocht up in virtue'<sup>25</sup> and, furthermore, there must be 'provisioun for those that be poore'. It is interesting that the *First Book of Discipline* contains the same ambivalent attitude to the purpose of learning between the individual and the societal as has already been identified and which threatens to drive all 'purists', including Laurie, into the utilitarian camp. Thus, 'For as youth must succeed us, so aucht we to be cairfull that thei have the knowledge and erudition to profit and comfort that whiche aucht to be most deare to us,— to wit, the Church and Spouse of the Lord Jesus.' But, those who are 'apt to letteris' may not 'be permittit to reject learnyng' so that 'the Commoun-wealthe may have some comfort by them'.<sup>26</sup> It is, however, unnecessary to attempt to trace the origins of this tension in Laurie's writing to any particular predecessor – rather, it is simply inherent in his views.

By the late 1840's, Laurie's student days when he might have been expected to form many of his opinions, there was a growing consensus that everyone should indeed be educated. The first grants directed to education were given for building and were authorised by parliament in 1833 and first paid in 1834. The Poor Law of 1845 laid a responsibility on parochial boards to pay for the education of the poor and Professor Anderson tells us that 'The children of the 1840's were often described as the first generation who automatically learned to write.'<sup>27</sup>

Laurie never wavered from his view that what was needed was a liberal education for all. 'In man, unlike the animals, there are the germs of a possible growth to something or other to which we cannot set limits; and this something or other is our ideal. So long as we keep this in view we are giving a "liberal" as opposed to a "technical" education.'<sup>28</sup> Not that he

---

<sup>25</sup> *The Works of John Knox Vol 2*, David Laing (ed.), (Edinburgh, 1895), 210

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 209 - 211

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, (Oxford, 1995), 141

<sup>28</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1892), 13

thought of this as an original idea. Indeed, he went as far as to say that, 'All thinkers of Education, of any importance, contend for a liberal education.'<sup>29</sup> Note the 'of any importance'. It allows Laurie simply to dismiss as not significant those who disagree with him. He was by no means the first to propound similar views. He himself wrote that Comenius was the first to say that you should educate every individual 'because they were human'.<sup>30</sup> To this he adds the curious statement that, 'Comenius' inspiring motive, like that of all leading educationalists, was social regeneration.'<sup>31</sup> 'Inspiring' might be taken here to mean that which motivated Comenius or, less likely, 'providing inspiration to others.' Either way, it is reasonable to assume that Laurie regarded himself as a leading educationalist and must therefore have seen himself as also being inspired by the prospect of social regeneration. Whilst not logically opposed to the previous statement it is certainly subordinate, and because it is not an adequate description of Laurie's own motives, it is surprising to find him associating himself so enthusiastically with it. However, it is worth considering the implications of the first statement. If individuals should be educated 'because they are human' then it must indeed be every individual because all are human. This is stated as if it were logically entailed but in fact it must rest on some prior assumption about the nature of 'human-ness', some attribute which mandates education. This cannot be purely social because many species of animal live in social structures without education and it would be perfectly possible to argue for a social structure for humans in which only some were to be educated for the benefit of all. Indeed, the kind of society which philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle envisaged was predicated on exactly that. It is much more likely that Comenius was thinking in terms of 'realising the self' or 'making the best use of talents' in exactly the way that Laurie was in his turn. No doubt the strands which led Laurie to his beliefs were many and varied and probably relied most heavily on his upbringing within the Scottish Presbyterian Church. However, he clearly admired Comenius and it may not be fanciful to suggest that in taking the line he did he was following a 'mentor', albeit one who had lived many years previously.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 37

<sup>30</sup> Laurie, *Studies in the History of Educational opinion from the Renaissance*, (Cambridge, 1903), 150

<sup>31</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 249

The subject of universal education was very much in the air as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth and Immanuel Kant's dictum on the subject is worth noting. He wrote that man is the only animal which needs education because the others are all provided with instincts.<sup>32</sup> This will not really do as it stands. Man has instincts and animals can be educated – or at least trained – and probably the most that can be said is that man may be the only animal which is fully capable of benefiting from education, which is not the same thing at all. Furthermore, even to assert that man needs education because he lacks the instincts and is capable of benefiting from it is not the same as to assert that all must be educated. There is, as always, an unstated hypothetical imperative at work. Man needs education *if he is to be able to do or to be all that he is potentially capable of doing or being*. Which leads back to Laurie and the fulfilment of potential, which is assumed as a good – provided always that it is the 'right' potential which is chosen for fulfilment.

#### Whom to educate? - practice

But even the most theoretical of ethical philosophers must put their thoughts into a social context and Laurie's observations on the provision of education ought therefore to be placed in social as well as philosophic context. Before attempting to do that directly, it may be instructive to consider some of the observations of James Pillans. Pillans states confidently that, 'No sane mind will be induced by appearances, however, alarming, to ... seriously believe that the moral and intellectual training of a whole population is in itself an evil ... of which further progress ought to be resisted.'<sup>33</sup> In evidence to a parliamentary select committee Pillans gives two reasons for believing that it would be desirable to educate everyone. 'I conceive that a well digested system of national education skilfully carried into execution would in the course of a generation or two almost extirpate crime.'<sup>34</sup> This was in the context of arguing, not just for education for all, but for compulsory education for all. And also:

The object of popular education, as far as the labouring classes and their children are concerned, is to create an appetite for knowledge, and a love of reading, and thus to furnish them with such harmless and improving means of mental occupation and amusement, as may

---

<sup>32</sup> E. Kant, *Ueber Padagogik*, tr. A. Churton, (Boston, 1906), 1

<sup>33</sup> *Edinburgh Review* 1834, Vol LIX, No CXX, 488

<sup>34</sup> PP 1834 Vol IX, *Report from Select Committee on the State of Education*, 49

save them from brutalizing pursuits, and fence them against the seduction of low and sensual indulgencies.<sup>35</sup>

It is significant that there is in this idea no concept of the 'ladder of opportunity'. Education is to be provided precisely in order to make the recipient's present station in life more tolerable and to enable him, or her, to live a more moral life within it. But this comes at a price and in the same year Pillans appears to question both the preceding observations. 'We now have the experience of one entire generation as to the effects of diffusing a certain amount of instruction among the lower classes. And what has been the result? Why, the increase of crime has kept pace with the increase of knowledge.'<sup>36</sup> and 'Education, while it sharpens the wit of the poor man, multiplies his wants, without materially improving his means of honestly satisfying them.'<sup>37</sup>

It is important to remember that to argue for education for all is by no means the same as to argue that all should have the same education. Pillans emphatically believed that they should not. There was an entirely, to his mind, satisfactory social structure consisting of upper, middle and lower classes. And one of the functions of education is to preserve this. In order to achieve this, the education of the higher orders matters more because the rulers are to come from there and it matters more than it did before because he is envisaging the education of the lower orders and the higher orders must keep ahead. The burden of his evidence to the select committee was that since the franchise had recently been extended by the Reform Act of 1832 and a wider section of the populace was therefore concerned with choosing their rulers and since they would not, he thought, choose those less well educated than themselves, the higher orders should retain their influence by being better educated than the masses. As he expressed it in views which were reiterated in a tract published in a collected edition of essays by various authors as late as 1862, though formulated in the 1830's, 'It would be difficult to form too high an estimate of the public interest.' (in educating the higher orders properly) and 'When the lower orders are well educated the

---

<sup>35</sup> Pillans, *Three lectures on the proper objects and methods of education*, (Edinburgh, 1836), Lecture I

<sup>36</sup> *Edinburgh Review* 1834, Vol LIX, No CXX, 488

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

aristocracy and the wealthy can only hope to keep their positions and influence ... and to ward off the revolution if they are better educated.’<sup>38</sup>

How, then do Laurie’s views fit into this context? He is at one with Comenius and Kant, though arriving at the conclusion by a different route, in his view that education should, as a consequence of our humanity, be for all. Laurie does go on to discuss social mobility but he is at pains to stress that this is secondary. It is a consequence of ‘proper’ education for ‘humanity’ and is not a valid aim in itself. It is for this reason that there would appear to be contradictions in his views. He refers to the Scottish doctrine of ‘getting on’ as a ‘devil’s gospel’ and he views socialism with abhorrence: ‘It is such an educational system as exists in the North East Counties of Scotland which realises the only true democratic idea, in presence of which all questions of suffrage are superficial. ... It makes the clever poor contented and thus saps the foundations of socialism.’<sup>39</sup>

He repeatedly stresses that the value of education is something quite separate from social mobility. Indeed, he considers that it diminishes the individual to suggest that this is its primary purpose: ‘to imagine a boy so educated will be a worse ploughman or a worse man than if he had been left in the condition of dumb driven cattle ... is to despair of the future of humanity.’ In arguing this way, particularly with his reference to making the clever poor contented, Laurie is very much following the line taken by Pillans. Laurie seems to argue that all should be educated for the benefit of the whole community but that, individually, the beneficiaries of this education should not expect a change in their status: ‘the true course is to provide for the intellectual and moral life of the people’s schools up to the age of fifteen ... the whole parish will be benefited’, and from the same paragraph, ‘intelligent citizens added to the artisan class not removed’ and again, ‘the main purpose of advanced classes (is the) promotion of the intelligence of the parish itself.’ He is also at one with Pillans in his view that it will only be a few who will, as it were, set the intellectual tone, although he does not express this in the same stark class terms as Pillans did: ‘It is only a few that ever go beyond the elements of any subject; but these few are worth all the rest put

---

<sup>38</sup> Pillans, *Educational Papers*, (Edinburgh, 1862), iv

<sup>39</sup> Laurie, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 183

together. Just as in society; it is a few men ... a few women, that maintain the standard of culture and social intercourse and make life worth living.’<sup>40</sup>

Throughout his working life, Laurie’s main concern was with the provision of education for children of all classes and of all abilities. In accepting a presentation from the schoolmasters of the Dick bequest schools in 1908 Laurie said he had, ‘sought to carry out the Idea of the Trust – what might be called the democratic view of education – namely that their efforts should be directed towards the masses of the people.’ His task had been to ‘see to it that every boy and girl got at least a chance in life’.<sup>41</sup> He certainly understood that, within any given school or classroom, there may be a conflict between these two aims. Thus he could say, ‘It is simply not fair that promising boys should have their progress checked and their mental activity restricted in order that dunces may be taught to spell. This is the worst kind of communistic socialism.’<sup>42</sup> However, he could also say, ‘I have no sympathy with those who would sacrifice the mass of the school to the few boys who desire preparation for the professions.’ This is not a case of Laurie’s ideas changing over time. Both these statements appear in the same volume, though not from the same lecture within it. The explanation is most likely to be found in Laurie’s pragmatic ‘reasonableness’. Taken together, the statements can be read as providing an argument against concentrating the energies and resources of a school or schoolmaster exclusively on one end of the spectrum or the other. Choices do have to be made and, in general, they must be made for the majority. This does not imply that no efforts should be directed to the ‘clever few’ or the ‘dunces’ only that these efforts should not be such as to sacrifice the rest. With regard to the ‘dunces’ he says, in a rather grudging pragmatic acceptance of the realities of mass education, ‘The dullest pupils have to be brought up to a minimum standard, and energies have to be wasted on them which would be much more profitably employed in ... the cultivation of the mind of the school.’<sup>43</sup> In addition, although the entire thrust of his work, especially in the Dick bequest schools, was towards the promotion of parochial schools, higher subjects and a liberal education, Laurie was not above an apparently gratuitous side-swipe at the very clever. ‘If school duxes retain their bodily health they almost always do

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 122, 131, 267

<sup>41</sup> *The Scotsman*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1908

<sup>42</sup> Laurie, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 112

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 113, 110

well in the world; but I believe the cases to be few in which they contribute much to the moral and intellectual advance of humanity.’<sup>44</sup> This particular observation was in the context of prizes and competition within schools and it is at least consistent with his centrally held belief that education is for the development of the individual and should not be aimed at ensuring worldly success in later life.

Thus Laurie believed in widespread education, for the individual and not for the purpose of ‘getting on’ per se. He also envisaged social mobility through education, albeit as a consequence and not as a primary aim, and this was important to him. He makes this clear when he writes, ‘It is the duty of the State ... to see that all its citizens have at least the opportunity ... of being educated ... not only to the level of their existing position in the social scale, but up to the level of their possible position.’<sup>45</sup>

However, it is possible to detect a difference between his view of rural education in the Dick bequest schools of Moray, Banff and Aberdeenshire and his expectations of city schools in Edinburgh. In the former, he is clear that the same opportunities should be there for all. The higher subjects should be available in every school, even if the number of those who would benefit directly might be relatively small. In the city, however, he falls foul of the problem inherent in the view that education should prepare individuals for their future place in life. The problem is that selection of a particular education as being appropriate for a particular child in preparing him or her for a particular place pre-judges the outcome and removes the possibility of social mobility. Laurie certainly fell into this trap. When reporting to the Merchant Company on their hospital schools in 1867 he advocated the dropping of Latin from the curriculum of Daniel Stewart’s Hospital because of the social background of the boys. Instead he proposes that they should be prepared for the guilds. By contrast, he believes Latin should be retained in George Watson’s because the children there were the sons of the middle classes and would mostly therefore expect to go on to the professions. Whether or not this should be seen as another example of Laurie’s pragmatic approach – he does allow that a very few exceptional boys at Stewart’s might be given

---

<sup>44</sup> Laurie, ‘Examinations, Emulation, and Competition’, *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1901), 243

<sup>45</sup> Laurie, ‘The general Function of the Primary School’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 118

Latin by taking time from English and arithmetic, in which, by definition, they would already be strong –or as a simple lack of imagination is a moot point. It is also probably indicative of a mind-set which accepted a high degree of social stability as not only given but desirable. Laurie did believe that there were differences between the social classes and that what would do for the lower classes would not necessarily be satisfactory when it came to the education of the middle and upper classes. This is illustrated by his observations on the need to provide ‘appropriate’ teachers:

The education of youths of the middle and upper classes can be adequately conducted only by masters who are (not only) qualified (academically) but (also) in respect of general cultivation and personal bearing on a level with the parents of the boys he is instructing.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, it is probably accurate to conclude that Laurie had a relatively unreflective attitude to class. He knew that there were, as a matter of fact, different social strata and nowhere does he suggest that this is in itself undesirable. Again as a matter of fact, the majority of people will remain in the class into which they were born and he does not suggest that this is undesirable. On the contrary, he makes it clear that belonging to a relatively humble class is no barrier to ‘self-realisation’. However, there are those who have the aptitude to benefit from education and to rise to a higher class and therefore this should be possible. Yet again, therefore, Laurie can be seen as both pragmatic and, to an extent, unimaginative.

### Education of Girls and Women

Laurie wrote very little directly about the education of girls at school, and at the student level, of women or on the subsidiary question of co-education as a means of doing so. He treats it as self-evident that girls should be educated, although not necessarily in the same way or to the same level. ‘In the education of a man, we use the word in a generic sense as signifying humanity.’<sup>47</sup> He also says that, ‘It is not at all necessary that boys and girls of seventeen should know much of anything, but it is essential that they know thoroughly, according to a sound method, what they profess to know.’ This second quotation, of course, entails education of girls as it does of boys. He does, naturally, use ‘sexist’ language,

---

<sup>46</sup> Laurie, ‘On the Government of High Schools’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 201

<sup>47</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 75



referring far more frequently to ‘boys’ than to ‘girls’ or even to ‘boys and girls’ though, as he put it, it is almost always clear from the context that, ‘the worthier gender stands for both male and female’.<sup>48</sup> He argues strongly and consistently for the parochial school model, whereby everyone in the parish attended the same school, and this clearly means both boys and girls. He did believe that girls should have a slightly different curriculum:

Girls must learn ‘domestic skills’ and therefore must drop something out. I think most men of cultivation will say that the most able women they have known – I mean those of the largest capacity, of the deepest moral power ... have been those who, in the strictest scholastic sense, knew least. The truth is that the intellect of a woman is a very delicate growth. What the world wants is not two men – a big one in trousers and a little one in petticoats, but a man and a woman.<sup>49</sup>

His educational views did not change when it came to considering women as students, though his understanding of the social consequences did. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Edinburgh Ladies Educational Association. He was not one of their earliest lecturers since they had a policy of inviting only professors but after he took up the chair of education in 1876 he was a regular contributor. He was also a supporter of female teachers, though this is not unexpected. Even as early as 1857 about one third of the five hundred teachers in training were women<sup>50</sup> and it would have been quite remarkable if Laurie had argued against them. All the same, there is more than a hint that one at least of his motives for supporting them was that they were cheaper. ‘A school equipped for six standards may, by means of female teachers be equipped for eight at a cost of from £40 to £60.’<sup>51</sup> The only, perhaps, discordant note which Laurie sounded on the subject of the education of females, at any age, was when he wrote, ‘For myself I am as anxious as anyone to give women a fair chance but I would rather see them all condemned for ever to the spinning wheel than get education at the cost of mixing with men.’<sup>52</sup> Although Laurie does not spell it out, it is reasonable to assume that his concerns were over sexual temptations and propriety, a consideration which does not arise when dealing with young, school-age, children.

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 40, 75

<sup>49</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Merchant Company*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 83

<sup>50</sup> Cruickshank, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1970), 62

<sup>51</sup> Laurie, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 168

<sup>52</sup> Letter to the ELEA, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1876, NAS

Thus it is clear that Laurie believed that girls should be educated; this follows logically on from his overarching view that the end of life, and consequently of education, was self-realisation. Women, too, are human and therefore women, as much as men, must strive to fulfil the ‘idea’ within them. However, for all that it is a subsidiary aim, the question of preparation for a role or place in society does arise when it comes to deciding on the proper content of an education. Here Laurie clearly had in mind the preparation both for a moral life and for domestic and child-rearing duties. He expresses this very clearly in the lecture he delivered on Herbert Spencer’s Moral Theory in 1892. He is speaking against a background of growing interest in women’s education and of a growing belief that ‘society’ and not necessarily the individual, is the proper focus of all education: ‘The day will come, if the race is to make progress, when it will be the other way about, and ‘Society’ will have to content itself with taking a second place, while the duties of the nursery and the parlour will make good their prior claim.’<sup>53</sup>

### The Charging of Fees

A consideration of Laurie’s attitude to the paying of fees for education is appropriate at this stage because he saw it, as he saw everything, as a moral issue. It would probably be stretching things too far to suggest that he derived his views from those of Pillans but there is no doubt that they were in agreement on this. Furthermore, Laurie continued to hold the same opinion long after the introduction of compulsory education for all and long after it had ceased to be a view which was commonly held. Pillans’ evidence to the select committee in 1834 reads:

Do you consider that education of that kind in primary schools should be gratuitous or that there should be a small payment? I think it decidedly better that there should be a payment. On what grounds? Upon the general ground that people value little what they do not pay for, and also on the ground of experience. The gratuitous system was tried in Edinburgh when the Lancastrian school was first established, and it was uniformly found that where the attendance was gratuitous the proportion of absentees was prodigiously increased.<sup>54</sup>

More typical of Laurie’s generation was David Ross who wrote:

---

<sup>53</sup> *The Scotsman*, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1892

<sup>54</sup> PP 1834 Vol IX, *Report from the Select Committee on the State of Education*, 36

There is a need for free secondary schools nearby especially in rural areas. The granting of free education has been one of the greatest boons the working classes have ever received; and if the privilege of higher education was also added ... our country would have high advantages indeed.<sup>55</sup>

D. Buchanan in his inaugural address as President of the Glasgow branch of the Educational Institute of Scotland referred to the difficulty of charging after a certain age and argued simply saying that fees should be abolished altogether.<sup>56</sup> These views were typical of the time but Laurie took a contrary position. As he himself expressed it:

The education of the child is also the education of the parent and every loosening of the primary duty devolving on the parent to educate his own children tends to weaken the family bond and is hurtful to the community. ... The child will become more and more the child of the State and less and less the child of its own father and mother.<sup>57</sup>

He also wrote that, 'The respectable operative of the new democracy is surely not going to inaugurate his reign by calling on the rich to give him doles. Gratuitous State-instruction for one particular class is compulsory alms. It is an infringement of his self respect, which he ought to resent.' In any case, Laurie points out that what is being proposed is not 'free' education. 'First I object to the phrase itself – free education! ... the reality is gratuitous instruction of four fifths of the community at the expense of the remaining fifth.' He sees no problem whatever about the state requiring duties of parents which incur a necessary cost, pointing out that parents are obliged to feed and clothe their children if they do not want to be charged with neglect. For Laurie, a requirement to educate would come into the same category. In typical Laurie fashion, he believed that there should be a safety net for those who could not pay. 'Where there is proven inability, then of course the fee should be remitted in individual cases by the School Boards.' And, also in typical Laurie fashion he is open-minded on the issue stating that, 'Whatever the past may have done, gratuitous instruction may yet be a good thing.'<sup>58</sup> Here, as so often, Laurie was anxious to be reasonable. He was no extremist and was frequently able to see the other point of view and, when he did so, he would take it into account.

---

<sup>55</sup> D. Ross, *The Art of Questioning*, (Glasgow, 1891), 10

<sup>56</sup> D. Buchanan, *Prominent educational topics: Inaugural Address given to the Glasgow EIS*, (Edinburgh, 1890)

<sup>57</sup> Laurie, 'Free Schooling', *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 29-30

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 18, 29 - 33

There are two other noteworthy points to be made on this subject in relation to Laurie's views. The first is that he did not consider that endowments fell into the same category as free education through taxation. Endowments were to be seen as a legacy to be enjoyed by whomever the testator had decided should benefit. In that respect it was neither charity nor at the expense of others any more than benefiting from a legacy of a house, for example, would have been. This led him into conflict with the Editor of *The Scotsman*. With reference to the Heriot Trust, the editor wrote that Laurie seemed to be arguing that there was, 'a difference between bursaries for individuals, which admittedly must reduce the burden of expense on the Board, and simply giving the money to the board and allowing them therefore to reduce rates' (this is probably true though not strictly logical). He also points out that Laurie had written to say that it is not being used simply to give free education; it was for 'fees and books for a specific class of children'. As the editor pointed out, this is 'a nice distinction to say the least'.<sup>59</sup>

The second important point is that Laurie believed that, if there were to be a case for free education, it would apply to the post and not the pre- compulsory period.<sup>60</sup> That which is free can be taken for granted with harmful effects on attendance, school governance and so on and charging at the early stages would make parents value what they were paying for and would make them demand proper standards. On the other hand, since it is clearly desirable to have a population which is educated beyond the elementary stage but since there is no compulsion on parents to see that it happens, it makes sense to provide the inducement of making it free from then on. Whether or not that argument is seen as compelling it has to be conceded that it is coherent.

### Conclusion

As has been seen, Laurie expressed his educational philosophy clearly and he held consistently to his views throughout his life. As a consequence of his writing and lecturing as well as of the administrative positions he held, his ideas were well known in Scottish educational circles and beyond during his lifetime and he himself had a high profile.

---

<sup>59</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1889

<sup>60</sup> Laurie, 'Free Schooling', *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 31

However, his views had their roots in the classical tradition and they were not in the forefront of nineteenth century educational thought with its growing emphasis on technical education and on 'relevance' to the world of work. As always, Laurie expressed his ideas forcefully and lucidly but it would be difficult to argue that he had a lasting influence on the development of educational theory. Certainly, there is no evidence of a 'school of Laurie' or of a coterie of philosophical adherents dedicated to developing and perpetuating his ideas as there was, for example, in the case of Herbart.

## Chapter V –Psychology

### Psychology

Psychology was seen in the nineteenth century as a new and exciting science. It had its roots in philosophy of mind and the word ‘psychology’ is recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as first having been used in 1673 to refer to the ‘doctrine of the soul’. (The full quotation from a translation of J. de Back’s *Discourse* in W. Harvey’s *Anatomical Exercises* is: ‘I call the general doctrine of man Anthropologie, the parts of which I do ordain to be, according to this division, psychologie, somatologie, haematology into the doctrine of the soul, body and blood.’<sup>1</sup>) Interest in psychology as philosophy of mind, rather than as an empirical science, grew considerably during the eighteenth century with the writing in particular of Hume and then of Reid, each of whom in their different ways, was concerned to try to discover how we connect with the external world (if there is an external world) and how we learn. However, the first half of the nineteenth century saw a definite shift towards a more empirical approach.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Brown, who was an assistant to Dugald Stewart at Edinburgh University and shared his title to the Chair of Moral Philosophy, graduated in medicine and although his lectures, published on his death in 1820, were still titled ‘Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind’, he was in the vanguard of psychology as a science. Brown’s principles of psychology concentrated on observation of the ways in which we appear to operate, drawing attention to the apparent importance of frequency and duration of connections of ideas or sensations and asserting that differences between individuals will affect perceptions as will states of health and emotion. Whilst important work was being done in Britain on this emerging ‘new’ science, Robert Thomson in his *History of Psychology* states, ‘The steps by which psychology was removed from being a branch of philosophy to

---

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, (on-line edition, 2005)

<sup>2</sup> R. Thomson, *The Pelican History of Psychology*, (Penguin, 1968), 21

becoming an experimental science in its own right were principally, indeed almost exclusively, the work of three German scientists: Gustav Fechner, Hermann von Helmholtz and Wilhelm Wundt.<sup>3</sup>

Johann Herbart had already developed his ideas on apperception and on how children learn but he had done this from a philosophical, rather than an experimental, point of view. He went a stage further than previous philosophers of mind by introducing a mathematical dimension to his views, in that he asserted that duration of sensation and, to an extent, intensity, could be measured and were of relevance. Fechner, von Helmholtz and Wundt took this further still, Fechner introducing statistical and experimental techniques designed to measure sensation; von Helmholtz measuring the speed of the nervous impulse and pioneering work on optics and Wundt establishing the first laboratory designed and equipped specially to study psychological problems. Fechner published his *Elemente der Psychophysik* in 1860, von Helmholtz measured impulse speed in 1850 and Wundt established his laboratory in 1879. Meanwhile, in Scotland, Alexander Bain was bringing coherence to the doctrine of ‘associationism’, though he did not invent it, associationism being the application of empirical observation to the relation between ideas and experiences to try to establish regularities and patterns in the hope of being able to formulate psychological laws to help us to order the contents of the mind.

This was the context within which Laurie was working and writing. He used the word ‘psychology’ fairly frequently. Indeed he stated that, ‘A close connection subsists between psychology and solid advances in education.’<sup>4</sup> However, it is clear that he was using it primarily in the traditional philosophical way. Thus when he published his collected lectures under the title *Institutes of Education* in 1892, Laurie reverts explicitly to philosophy of mind to underpin his psychology. As he states in the preface to that work:

I have used the term on the title page ‘rational psychology’ to distinguish my point of view. Doubtless it might be maintained that no-one should in these days attempt any philosophy of mind until empirical psychology has completed its microscopic task, and psycho-physics has said its last word. This would be to strike dumb all but the devotees of physical

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 54

<sup>4</sup> Laurie, ‘Philosophy of Education in relation to the School and the Teacher’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 70

experimentation, while they themselves do not hesitate to travel outside their particular field, and commit themselves to speculative opinions (eg freedom of the Will) which contain implicit in them a whole metaphysical system.<sup>5</sup>

In the same preface Laurie reminds the reader that he is concerned with the theory of education, not with psychology for its own sake and that, in his view, it was necessary to have a comprehensive philosophy of mind against which to set his views. Thus:

A writer on the theory of Education is really writing at once a theory of life and a treatise de emendatione intellectus, and he cannot dispense with a rational and rationalised scheme of mind, be it right or wrong. He will be thankful for all that physiology and physics can give him; but meanwhile, and until better advised, he must follow his own course. ... After all, psycho-physics can never be more than physics.<sup>6</sup>

Most revealingly, Laurie writes that:

It will be granted that the uncorrelated phenomena of consciousness, which empirical psychology offers us, cannot in itself yield a theory of knowledge, much less a philosophy of life. There must be some principle, idea (call it what you will) which correlates and unifies.<sup>7</sup>

Laurie's entire approach to his life and his life's work depends on there being an 'end' for man and for individual men and on the realisation of that 'end' being the purpose of life. Any philosophy which would lead to scepticism or atheism, as in the case of David Hume, or to the denial of the common sense doctrine of dualism could not be countenanced. Still worse would have been any suggestion of determinism, since that would have denied the possibility of moral action. And it may have been a fear of this which lay behind his obvious scepticism of the value of experimental and physiological psychology. In typical Laurie fashion, he does not deny that these things have something to offer, only that they could provide answers on a philosophical level. 'If man be not a one self-identical conscious entity, having within it certain desires, emotions and faculties (which it is the business of psychology to explain), in the fulfilment and harmonious regulation of which the Ego finds the purpose of its existence, there is not even 'matter' for Ethics, much less Ethics.'<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), iii

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, iii

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, iv

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 260



Thus there is a role for psychology but it must, in Laurie's view, always be subsidiary. For him, psychology may help to explain certain aspects of human learning and perhaps even behaviour but it cannot hope to contribute to the 'aim' of education, or of life itself, which remains self-realisation.

Laurie is also mindful in *Institutes of Education* that he is providing a course of lectures on the practicalities of teaching. Thus he writes, 'It is quite unnecessary, in my opinion, to carry students of Education into all the details of Logic, Psychology, Ethics and Physiology. It is necessary, however that the philosophy which they study should be seen to be truly the Science of the Art'. The lectures themselves seek to take the student through the fundamentals of philosophy, physiology and psychology, as Laurie sees them, but always with the aim of establishing practical rules or guidelines for teaching and of creating a complete methodology. As is made clear in the preface, Laurie does not want to discuss physiology or psychology where they seek to go beyond the useful from the narrow perspective of the would-be teacher. He does add an appendix where he re-states his 'philosophy of psychology' but he specifically says that this is chiefly for my own satisfaction and that it is to be 'omitted by students of Education'.<sup>9</sup> Thus he relegates psychology to the status of an interesting study, rather than a core part of the teacher's armoury.

So it is clear that Laurie was not an enthusiast for 'modern' trends in psychology. He was, as in so much of his thinking, 'traditional' at best, and 'stuck in the past' at worst. What is interesting in relation to Laurie is not the specific content of the work being done on experimental psychology during his lifetime but the fact that, although he was evidently aware of it, this work was not of great interest to him. The appendix, which Laurie advises his students not to read, provides a further insight into Laurie's attitude towards experimental psychology. Writing about man he says:

This individuated being or conscious entity is, I say, '*one*'; it is not made up of parts, any more than 'life' in the plant or animal is made up of parts. Though the peculiar sensibility and activity which we call consciousness is specially allied with a specific part of the body as its instrument, viz. the brain, it itself is not to be confounded with the physical conditions of its

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, iv

manifestation, any more than life in a plant is to be confounded with certain molecular movements in the matter of the plant.<sup>10</sup>

Here is Laurie's reaction to the increasing emphasis on the physiological in psychology. Whilst not denying that there is matter in the brain which could be studied, he is at pains to ensure that science does not remove the primacy of the individual as a unique entity having at its core 'mind' or perhaps 'soul'. 'Men become too much enamoured of what they can see and weigh and measure.'<sup>11</sup> Laurie saw the psychologists as attempting to explain everything in terms of measurable matter and thus of trying to establish a monism in which there was only matter. He, however, takes the Cartesian view that even if all is matter, and therefore subject to the laws of matter, which do not allow for will, even if the mind only 'thinks it thinks', there must be an entity which is mind, self, soul, call it what you will, but which is emphatically not matter and which is therefore ultimately knowable – in so far as it is knowable - by means of philosophy of mind and not by scientific measurement.

Laurie's metaphysical beliefs are expounded in *Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta* and there is a review of it by Andrew Seth, which appeared in *Mind* in 1884, which sheds a light on Laurie's approach. Seth begins by writing, 'By calling his work a return to dualism, the author of this book evidently wishes to express his adhesion, so far, to the national tradition of Scotch philosophy.'<sup>12</sup> Thus Laurie was seen, not just in retrospect but by at least one of his contemporaries, as resisting the then fashionable idealist position. However, Seth argues, Laurie is cautious even in his assertion of the common sense view. Thus he concludes his review by saying that:

More especially does faith preponderate over knowledge when we pass into the moral sphere and contemplate the great fact of the existence of evil. So the author (Laurie) freely admits that 'in one sense' his treatise exemplifies afresh the old saying 'Omnia exeunt in mysterium.' But it is far from being written in a mystical or misological spirit, and the qualified dualism which the writer professes, is a position which would probably be shared by many who now occupy a more ambitious platform, if they distinguished with like carefulness between their metaphysical knowledge and their metaphysical faith.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 253

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 254

<sup>12</sup> *Mind*, October 1884, Vol IX, No 36, 574

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 579

Laurie was consistently happier with the ideas of the Scottish Common Sense movement than with either the philosophy of idealism, or the more mechanistic approach of the emerging science of experimental psychology and for the practical purposes of his students he takes dualism and the ethical end of education as axiomatic. He then proceeds from philosophy to practice in clearly defined steps.

There is much in Laurie's approach to psychology with which his contemporaries would have taken issue but it is important to separate out his theoretical views on psychology from his practical recommendations on the business of teaching. Even if his ideas about mind and how we learn, and about the place of philosophy in the training of teachers, are not accepted, it does not follow that his practical suggestions are to be dismissed out of hand nor that they could not have been acceptable in their time and have been of utility. Before considering his ideas on the practice of teaching there remains an interesting additional aspect to Laurie and psychology which is worth considering here even though it was a 'dead end' in itself and as far as Laurie's own thought and later work are concerned.

### Phrenology

Laurie did, as a young man, flirt with 'scientific psychology' in the form of phrenology. Phrenology was a fashionable 'science' in the first half of the nineteenth century and can be seen as part of the attempt to develop philosophy of mind along scientific lines. George Combe was a leading proponent of this new 'science' and had founded the 'Phrenological Society' in Edinburgh in 1820, following up with the publication of *The Constitution of Man in Relation to External Objects* in 1828. The book was very successful and ran to an eighth and final edition which appeared in 1847. By then, however, belief in phrenology had disappeared from mainstream thinking within Scotland. It had been widely accepted in the period between the 1770's and about 1810 but after that criticism began to appear, notably from Sir William Hamilton, who might have been expected to have exerted an influence on the young Laurie.

There is no reference to phrenology in any of Laurie's published works, the first of which appeared in 1859, but he does discuss the matter in correspondence with George Combe

between 1849 and 1853. Laurie never quite brings himself to commit whole heartedly to a belief in phrenology but it would appear on the slender evidence available that he showed an increasing acceptance of it whilst acting as a private tutor. Thus in 1849 Combe writes to him, 'I had supposed that you had attained to a conviction of the truth of Phrenology, but as you have not, I cannot expect you to teach it.'<sup>14</sup> Shortly afterwards, however, Laurie is writing, 'Although I have not taught him Phrenology – I have acted upon it – This may appear to be inconsistent but I find it to be true in his case – and the reason I withhold my belief is to discover it by personal observation to be true in a number of cases sufficient to warrant my adopting it as truth.'<sup>15</sup> This can be read as further evidence of Laurie's pragmatism. Although he saw himself as a philosopher, he frequently demonstrates that if something 'works' he is prepared to accept the fact and simply to gloss over any apparent conflict with his basic philosophical position. By 1853 Laurie seems to have moved some way towards acceptance of phrenology:

I carried them through a course of Phrenology last Spring and it is a subject which forms the subject of frequent references and conversation. But I crippled its power by teaching it as a theoretical system not as practical and recognised truth. Honesty compelled me to do this, for myself, while accepting the principles and first positions of phrenology and recognising its scientific character as a Philosophy of Mind I am not prepared to affirm my entire faith in all the inductive results contained in your works. I am naturally sceptical and slow in coming to a conclusion on a matter of importance and with regard to this science I feel that I cannot give my consent to more than I can myself verify.<sup>16</sup>

This is the last recorded instance of a reference to the subject by Laurie and it is to be assumed that he decided, after all, that he did not believe that it had validity or a place in psychology as it related to the art of teaching. Given Laurie's other observations on psychology in general this is not surprising. Anything which tended towards a deterministic explanation of behaviour was to be resisted. Some explanation therefore needs to be given for Laurie's brief flirtation with the ideas it contained.

It is clear from their correspondence, only a limited part of which survives, that Laurie regarded Combe as a mentor and someone to whom he could turn for advice. In addition, Combe was a distinguished man and Laurie a very young one at the time. It seems likely,

---

<sup>14</sup> Combe to Laurie 12<sup>th</sup> December 1849, Vol 7392, 14 NLS

<sup>15</sup> Laurie to Combe 28<sup>th</sup> December 1849, Vol 7302, 16 NLS

<sup>16</sup> Laurie to Combe 28<sup>th</sup> October 1853, Vol 7334, 73 NLS

therefore, given that phrenology as an explanation of behaviour was by then unfashionable and given that no further reference is made to it by Laurie after George Combe's death in 1858, that he expressed an interest as a result of a combination of being over-influenced by, and not wishing to offend, his mentor.

### Stages of learning

In moving from the purely theoretical to laying the foundations for his practical philosophy of education, including his ideas on the proper content of an 'age appropriate' curriculum (to employ a useful anachronistic expression), Laurie makes use of the idea of stages of childhood corresponding to the kinds of learning which he believed possible at successive ages. In doing this he was not breaking new ground. Comenius had, some two hundred and fifty years previously, identified four stages of learning: infancy from the age of 0 to 6, during which children learned in the 'mother school' – in effect in the home; boyhood, from 6 to 12 years of age, during which education would be in the 'vernacular public school' which would exist in every village; adolescence from 12 to 18 with a 'Latin school' in every province; and finally a university in every kingdom or large province.<sup>17</sup>

Herbart also divided education into four stages and these corresponded very closely with Laurie's own scheme. First, for both of them, came 'babehood' which lasted from 0 to 3 years old for Herbart and from 0 to 2 for Laurie. Next followed 'infancy' which both writers thought would last until the child was 8 years old. From 8 to 15 constituted what Herbart called 'boyhood' and Laurie 'childhood' – though Laurie subdivided this stage into two; from 8 to 12 corresponding to 'lower primary' and from 12 to 15 corresponding to 'upper primary'. Finally came 'youth' for Herbart and 'boyhood' and 'adolescence' for Laurie. The terminology is of much less importance than the fact of the subdivisions and the fact that Herbart and Laurie drew their dividing lines in almost identical places.

---

<sup>17</sup> John Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, tr. Keatinge, (London, 1910), 255

### Infancy

During this stage both Herbart and Laurie believed that the baby was a passive recipient of stimuli. Herbart called these ‘perceptions’ which accumulated in the mind to become an ‘apperception mass’. Laurie coined the term ‘attutions’ to denominate essentially the same thing. Effectively, for Laurie, humans and animals alike receive sensations and react to them. They both sense likeness and unlikeness and can sense only totalities. Nevertheless different sensations can awaken different appetites and can provoke responses in pre-programmed ways. There is also a simple but undifferentiated capacity for memory. Laurie has to assert that the attitudinal stage allows for action in response to sensations since otherwise he would have to put animals on the same footing as humans and this he would never have been willing to do.

In many ways, for both Laurie and Herbart infancy is the most interesting and crucial stage of all because they have to explain how the child moves on from the passive stage of attuition or apperception to the stage when it is possible for the individual to make sense of the external world and to make decisions about it. On the face of it, and in purely philosophical terms, their conclusions were very different. In practical terms, as far as learning and the construction of a suitable curriculum were concerned, the consequences of their theories have much in common. For Herbart, the key lay in the fact that he believed that there were inherent qualities in ideas which made them either attractive or repellent to each other. Thus:

The capacity for education is determined, not by the relationship in which various originally distinct mental faculties stand to one another, but in the relations of ideas already acquired to one another, and to the physical organism. Each pupil must be studied with reference to both.<sup>18</sup>

Herbart actually regarded ideas as being ‘dynamic’. They interact with each other, either positively, in which case they retain their intensity and become part of our ‘mind furniture’ (my phrase, not Herbart’s) or negatively whereby ideas which oppose each other ‘diminish each other’ (Lange and De Garmo’s translation of Herbart’s phrase). Next comes the

---

<sup>18</sup> J. Herbart, *Outlines of Educational Doctrine*, tr. Lange and De Garmo, (MacMillan, New York, 1901), 21

creation of ‘volition’. This is essential for the development of virtue which is central to Herbart’s thought. ‘Man’s worth lies not in his knowing but in his willing. ... Volition has its roots in thought; not indeed in the details one knows, but certainly in the combinations and total effects of the acquired ideas.’ Thus it is the combination of apperceptions, followed by the interest which the right combination will create which in turn generates willing. This has great bearing on the educative process since it becomes the responsibility of the educator to ensure that the right set of apperceptions arises in each individual as a result of properly chosen presentations. Because our mental activity is complex and varied, our interest has to be stimulated in a complex and varied way and this Herbart terms ‘many-sided interest’: ‘The ultimate purpose of instruction is contained in the notion, virtue. But in order to realise the final aim, another and nearer one must be set up. We may term it *many-sided interest*.’<sup>19</sup> This, essentially, is Herbart’s explanation of the process whereby humans move from a state of being helpless and passive and the recipient simply of apperceptions to one where they are able to make moral choices.

Laurie sought to move from the same starting point to the same conclusion. After attuition comes the introduction of the idea of ‘will’, leading to ‘will-reason’. This is, according to Laurie a ‘faculty’ given to man, but not to animals, which allows humankind to order sensations, to categorise them and hence to progress to naming and to language. The exercise of will and will-reason is what enables humans to move beyond the attitudinal stage to perceiving, which, for Laurie, equates to elementary knowledge. The introduction of will is crucial for Laurie if he is to hold on to his fundamental belief that man is an ethical being and that life has a purpose. As he himself puts it:

This is the true doctrine unless you accept the only alternative, viz. that the mind of man is to be explained as a bundle of impressions and reflex actions determined always and at all times by something *not himself*, and that what you imagine to be the purest and loftiest act of Will is merely (as some would call it) the result of a ‘complex of sensations’. It is at *this* point and at *no other* that that battle of Free Will as a moral question must be fought, and either gained or lost. If Will be not at the root of pure reason, it is an illusion to imagine it free when directed to moral ends.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 40, 44

<sup>20</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 82

After perception comes conception, by the further application of will-reason. Whereas the stage of perception allows us merely to deal with ‘wholes’, to perceive a set of sensations as an entity, conception allows us to go a stage further. With this stage comes the ability to perceive entities as wholes but also to appreciate that the individual entity comprises many ‘attributes’. It is at this stage that we also reach the stage of *self-consciousness*. It is this new stage which enables the use of sophisticated language to make sense of the external world and, hence, it is this stage which enables all advanced teaching. At this point Laurie writes, ‘Some may say that the general proposition must precede the general concept. ... But in its explicated form as a proposition it follows (I think) the general concept, and is an explication of it. For educational purposes this matters little.’<sup>21</sup> In this way Laurie brushes aside one of the central questions of the use of language. There can be no doubt that Laurie would have been well aware of the potential complexity of the issue and it is interesting that his pragmatism on educational matters should have shown through at this point. Laurie thus introduces the concept of will in order to justify his belief in the possibility of ethical action and also in order to explain our (apparent?) ability to make sense of the external world on a level which he considers is denied to animals. As he puts it, ‘Will is the free self-generated nisus of the conscious subject.’<sup>22</sup> It is also will which makes it possible for us to learn and, significantly, to direct our own learning through the faculty of ‘attention’. ‘Attention is an act of will sustained with a purpose.’<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that the fundamental purpose of education was for Herbart and Laurie essentially the same. Thus Herbart wrote, ‘The term virtue expresses the whole purpose of education.’<sup>24</sup> Similarly, as Laurie put it, ‘Our aim in the school, therefore, is an ethical aim, and all we do is of true value only in so far as it contributes to this.’<sup>25</sup> For them both, the exercise of individual will or volition was a prerequisite for virtuous action. This explains why Herbart needed to introduce the apparently superfluous concept of volition into his thinking. If ideas have inherent qualities which enable them to combine to create

---

<sup>21</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 167

<sup>22</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 108

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> J. Herbart, *Outlines of Education*, tr. Lange and De Garmo, (MacMillan, New York, 1901), 7

<sup>25</sup> Laurie, ‘Philosophy of Education in relation to the School and the Teacher’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 89



the option of volition in the subject then there is no logical reason why these same ideas might not have combined to produce action, thus by-passing the volitional stage and rendering the concept of subjective virtue unnecessary. By the same token, Laurie introduced the idea of a feeling of 'harmony' (see chapter III) to explain how it is possible to recognise the 'right' decision. Again, this concept is not fully explained. Laurie did not acknowledge Herbart explicitly as an influence and there were significant differences between them in terms of their understanding of the philosophy of mind. Nevertheless, it does seem reasonable to suggest that Laurie, writing later than Herbart and certainly having read his work, must have owed something to him, although it is possible that Laurie himself may not have recognised this.

### Curriculum

There are similarities in the approaches of Laurie and Herbart to the very early stages of childhood and they both stand in marked contrast to the recommendations of Comenius. Essentially, because Laurie and Herbart set such store by 'attentions' followed by the exercise of will-reason, in Laurie's view, or 'perceptions' followed by the interactions of ideas with themselves and with the child, from Herbart's, they both believed that education should be approached gently. Thus Herbart, 'Those moments when the child is fully awake and free from pain should be utilized by presenting, but not obtruding, something for sense perception. Powerful impressions are to be avoided.' and, 'As far as safety permits, the spontaneous activity of the child should have free play.'<sup>26</sup> This stands comparison with Laurie's 'Up to the age of five or six you may introduce a child to new objects as sensational wholes, which in his ordinary experience might escape him; but this is all.'<sup>27</sup> Neither Laurie nor Herbart would have had the child in formal education at this stage and Laurie, in addition, makes it clear that he agreed with Rousseau that education should not, at any stage, be forced. 'Do not anticipate' and on the same page he actually quotes Rousseau as saying, 'L'esprit, non plus que le corps, ne porte que ce qu'il peut porter. ... Laissez mûrir l'enfance dans les enfants.'<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Herbart, *Outlines of Education*, tr. Lange and De Garmo, (MacMillan, New York, 1901), 199

<sup>27</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 119

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 165

Laurie does suggest that, as the child nears the end of this first developmental stage, it is permissible to extend his educational experience a little – but only a little. ‘During the last two years of infancy – the sixth and seventh years - you may safely give him object-lessons of a more extended kind, but they must be given as an exercise in the perception of qualities which are obvious and superficial; and objects not within the range of common life should always be avoided.’<sup>29</sup> This gradualist approach could hardly be more different from the curriculum recommended for the mother school by Comenius. This curriculum is sufficiently remarkable to modern eyes, and would have been to Laurie, to merit reproduction here:

Mother School Curriculum:<sup>30</sup>

Beginnings of metaphysics, Physics, Optics, Astronomy, Geography, Chronology, History, Arithmetic, Geometry, Statics, Mechanics, Beginnings of dialectic, Grammar, Rhetoric, Poetry, Economics, Polity, Morality, Religion and Piety.

In each case Comenius expands on what the topic should contain and, although it is not necessary to go into detail here, the suggestion that geography should contain ‘what a mountain, plain, valley, river, village, city, state etc are’ gives an idea of how demanding his outline curriculum was. It is interesting to note the rationale which Comenius gives for imposing such a demanding curriculum on the very young. This relates only partly to his understanding of the learning process. He does say that children learn more easily when unformed, like wax before it hardens. Of much greater importance in this context is his belief that this life is only a preparation for eternity and that the only way for that preparation to be carried out properly is through education. It follows that, since there is no way of knowing when death will come, education must be started as soon as possible.<sup>31</sup> It is possible, therefore, to state with confidence that, however influential Comenius was on Laurie in respect of method, he had no influence on him in the formulation of his views on the appropriate curriculum for very young children.

After the initial stage of babehood or infancy has passed, what might be termed ‘formal education’ begins. Laurie's presentation of what he believes appropriate, is exhaustive. He

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 119

<sup>30</sup> Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, tr Keatinge, (London, 1901), 259-263

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 57, 58

makes it clear that he himself did not regard his views as necessarily original. Indeed he states that they have ‘received the support of every writer on education’.<sup>32</sup> However, he states that this support has not had any scientific basis and that it is ‘precisely this scientific basis which we have to ascertain; this is Theory as distinct from Art or Practice.’<sup>33</sup> Laurie was thinking in terms of his own ‘philosophy of mind’ approach to psychology when he referred to a ‘scientific basis’ and to that extent much of his underlying rationale may be questionable. However, what is not in doubt is that what he produced was a very thorough and coherent explanation of what he believed should be taught in the classroom and also of the way in which it should be taught. Even if he, like his predecessors could be accused of not having a proper scientific basis for his claims, his work had considerable practical value.

The first thing to be noted is that, after the stage of infancy, Laurie did not specify which subjects should be taught at which particular ages, only that, in educating we should, ‘follow the Order of Mind-Growth, which is also, generally speaking, the order of Brain-Growth.’ And, ‘Whatever subjects we teach, each should be taught from the beginning, that at whatever age social necessities may interrupt the course of instruction, the pupil shall have received all the benefit his age admits of.’<sup>34</sup> He maintained consistently throughout his life that, ‘there is no such thing as a primary subject and no such thing as a higher subject. Every subject has its beginning, its middle and its end.’<sup>35</sup> and that, ‘If a school parade were held at the end of any year, the eighteen-year-old out-going boys would be exhibiting their comprehension of precisely the same things as the infant school child was dealing with; but in a more advanced form: that is all.’<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, ‘It will be apparent that I do not believe in the distinction of primary and secondary instruction, although I use the terms.’<sup>37</sup> Thus Laurie makes it clear that the appropriate curriculum at any given stage is governed only by the development of the brain of the child and that, if it is right to study a particular subject then it is right to study it at every stage, albeit at a

---

<sup>32</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 139

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 160, 70

<sup>35</sup> Laurie, ‘Higher Subjects in Elementary Schools’, *Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 155

<sup>36</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 65

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 71

progressively more advanced level. With this in mind, Laurie sets out in detail his concept of the ideal curriculum.

The educational process must contain:

A Instruction (knowledge)<sup>38</sup>

1. Instruction in our relations to things and persons, commonly called intellectual instruction.
2. Instruction in moral ideas, commonly called moral instruction
3. Instruction in the spiritual ie the religious idea (God)

This bears a striking similarity to Comenius' statement on the educational process, as set out by Laurie himself:<sup>39</sup>

It is accordingly required of man that-

- (1) He should know all things.
- (2) He should have power over all things and over himself.
- (3) He should refer himself and all things to God, the Source of All.

These requirements are summed up in the words knowledge, virtue, piety. Given that Laurie held Comenius in evident high regard it seems reasonable to infer that this similarity of basic statement was not accidental.

Laurie divides the elements of the curriculum into three categories; the 'real-naturalistic' – which means essentially what we may know of the external world and therefore includes everything which would now come under the heading of 'science'; the 'real-humanistic' – which means everything to do with language and literature and with history, moral instruction and 'sociology' (though Laurie does not use that term); and the 'formal' or 'abstract' – which he describes as being 'with a view chiefly to the discipline of the mind' and thus includes arithmetic, mathematics, logic and rhetoric.<sup>40</sup> Reading and writing he sees as being necessary but only as a means to the end of studying other things. In themselves they have no special merit. The complete list is extensive and Laurie does not suggest that all children can cope with all of it at the same time. Nevertheless, he does say that, 'The

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 51

<sup>39</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 108

<sup>40</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 53-54

above are our material of instruction –the food we give; and they are also the subjects by which we discipline and train the intelligence and moral nature of the young to an ethical result. There are, within the range of school life, up to the end of the secondary period, no other subjects having equal claims.’<sup>41</sup>

The third stage of education is the one which Laurie sees as corresponding to the primary school, which he divides into lower primary, from age 8 to 12, and upper primary from 12 to 15. This stage he calls ‘childhood’ and he says that, in terms of mental development, children are now fully capable of conception and the faculties of generalisation and reasoning are beginning to show themselves. He picks the age of 12 to mark the difference between lower and upper primary school because that is, he says, the age of puberty. During this stage, we may begin to go beyond mere conception and deal with causes, and hence with the ‘essences’ of things. However, we are enjoined to remember that ‘all educational method is governed by the principle which requires us to follow the order of growth of mind; and consequently, the age at which a boy is to study things in their causes is a question to be anxiously considered.’<sup>42</sup>

Childhood is followed by ‘boyhood or girlhood’ which lasts from the fifteenth to the eighteenth year. During this stage, which corresponds to ‘secondary or high school’, reasoning is more fully developed and ‘perception of cause and effect becomes active’.<sup>43</sup> Finally, there is what Laurie calls ‘adolescence’, from the age of eighteen to the early twenties and corresponds to the age at which those who are going to do so attend university. During this stage all the mental faculties become fully operational.

In identifying different stages of maturity and, consequently, in suggesting a graduated approach to education, Laurie was not breaking new ground. Indeed, both Plato and Aristotle had something to say on the subject as did Quintilian and it was a central tenet of both Comenius’ and Herbart’s philosophy. It would therefore be impossible to state that Laurie’s ideas in this direction were inspired by this or that particular writer. What can, as

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 54, 55

<sup>42</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 162

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 166

usual, be asserted is that Laurie was not really an original thinker but that he had a particular talent for the organisation and presentation of his ideas.

### Curriculum content

Having explained the different stages of ‘mind-growth’ and that no subject is of itself better suited to one age rather than another, although the manner of its presentation and the depth to which it is studied will be, Laurie can then go on to explain his rationale for the inclusion of particular subjects in the curriculum. In doing this, he was guided throughout by his underlying philosophy of what education was for – the enablement of self-realisation in its fullest sense. Thus any subject is seen simply as a means to an end and, in Laurie's view, some subjects are more efficient than others. More than that, Laurie argues that the end in education is not achieved through the teaching of subjects. They remain always and only tools. The true value of any subject is to be seen in the moral examples it sets. Thus, ‘It cannot, then, be by the Latin or mathematics we teach the boy that we make him a true or capable man. It is by the life we present for his admiration and acceptance in literature and history, and, above all, by the life we live before his eyes.’<sup>44</sup> It follows that the most important subject for instruction is language because this gives access to literature, which is where the examples of admirable behaviour of others, on which the child is to base his or her moral development, are to be found. The great mistake is to become sidetracked by the practical. Laurie again makes it clear that he has no time for the utilitarian approach:

We yet must hold that all efforts to obtain the supreme educational end – capacity, wisdom, and virtue – will assuredly fail if we subject our boys to courses of instruction which, being ‘practical’ in the narrow utilitarian sense, fail to educate in the larger Hellenic sense. Accordingly, we maintain that in the primary and secondary school alike, language must still continue to take precedence of all other studies ... language is the chief of all liberal studies.<sup>45</sup>

And again, strikingly:

If a man of general cultivation were to open a book on embryology, he might read a whole page without understanding a single word ... But as a man he is none the worse because he

---

<sup>44</sup> Laurie, ‘The Respective Functions in Education of Primary, Secondary, and University Schools’, *Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 99-100

<sup>45</sup> Laurie, ‘Organization of the Curriculum of Secondary Schools in Great Britain’, *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 63

does not understand it, and if he had been able to understand it, as a man, he would have been none the better. Now let him take up a volume of poems by, say, George Herbert. If he does not understand that, then, as a man, he is so much the worse; but, understanding it, he is so much the better.<sup>46</sup>

Obviously, in order to be able to access such works the pupil must learn language. More than that, he or she must begin by learning the vernacular because, 'Language is the sole universal in the education of every human being.' and, 'It is almost self-evident that the mother-tongue ought to be the beginning, middle, and end of all linguistic instruction. Here we part company with the classical Humanist. All other languages should, so to speak, play up to the vernacular.' However, Laurie is not prepared simply to dispense with the study of Latin and he provides two rather curious reasons for retaining it. First he asserts that, 'It requires no argument to show that no man can know his own tongue unless he knows, at least, one other well.' He also argues that, 'Latin above all other tongues ought to be the basis, along with English, of all linguistic training. So true is this that it seems to us (to apply an old witticism in a new connexion) that if we had not Latin, it would be necessary to invent it.'<sup>47</sup> In the absence of any supporting evidence from Laurie for this claim, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Latin had been for so long an integral part of a liberal education that Laurie simply could not imagine doing without it. Then he states that as well as informing the learning of the vernacular, knowledge of the Latin tongue will enable the study of classical literature and, 'Still less can we afford to part with the impersonal and objective teachings of Greece and Rome and to substitute for them the subjective and partisan lessons of modern life.'<sup>48</sup> This is a remarkable claim and it is hard to see why Laurie should have supposed writers at any given period in history to have been more impartial than at any other given period. To that extent, his claim is clearly spurious. Neither of these claims demonstrates that the study of Latin is worthwhile but the fact that one is unsubstantiated and the other simply wrong does not necessarily imply that it is not.

In describing the content of the ideal curriculum Laurie makes it very clear that anything else is secondary to language. What is more, he makes it clear that beyond some

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 66

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 65, 69, 70, 71

<sup>48</sup> Laurie, 'The Teaching Profession and Chairs of Education', *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 34

mathematics and the rudiments of nature-knowledge, it does not matter much what is studied:

First of all, and always, Language (the vernacular, Latin, and what else there may be time for) ... secondly, a certain amount of pure mathematics, and, in subordination to both, the elements of physical science in so far as it is contributory to intelligent nature-knowledge. ... The introduction of any other subjects is to be determined by predisposition and natural aptitude, or, it may be, by considerations of utility alone – whether the subject be Greek, French, German, advanced mathematics, or physical science in its more exact and laboratory sense. I do not think it matters which of these are selected, if our curriculum has already assured the *education of the minds* of the pupils.<sup>49</sup>

It is important to appreciate what Laurie thought belonged under the umbrella title of ‘literature’. Significantly, it included history. This was not simply the acquisition of knowledge of previous events. It was nothing less than a vehicle for teaching morals. ‘The supreme purpose ... is ... the enriching of the humanity of the pupil with a view to an ethical result. ... The quantity known is of little importance.’<sup>50</sup> Moreover, not only was the quantity known not important, neither was its accuracy. ‘It matters nothing that the poetry you give contains much that is legendary. A national legend is far more significant in the inner history of a people than a bald fact.’ This cavalier attitude to accuracy is explained partly by the fact that Laurie does not think that history can be taught as a reasoned subject before the age of about 16 or 17 but mainly by the fact that it has as its chief subject matter ‘man as a political being; as political, law abiding; and as law abiding, moral’.<sup>51</sup>

Thus Laurie is entirely consistent in his views; there are only two valuable processes in education- first, the acquisition of skills, such as reading and writing which are needed to gain access to the second, and more important, process of moral education through the thoughts and example of others who have gone before.

Geography, which features high on Laurie's list of subjects worth studying, falls into both categories. For Laurie, geography included such nature knowledge as the primary child would need to learn, including the ‘laws of healthy living’. Crucially, however,

---

<sup>49</sup> Laurie, ‘Theory and the Curriculum of Secondary Schools’, *Teachers Guild Addresses*, (London, 1892), 46

<sup>50</sup> Laurie, ‘History and Citizenship in the School’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 260

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 264, 256



‘Geography is indispensable to the understanding of history.’<sup>52</sup> He also argues that, ‘It is because of the intellectual and moral effects that Geography claims an important place.’<sup>53</sup> Indeed, according to Laurie, ‘It (Geography) embraces all that it is necessary for a cultivated man to know of the world of nature, it gives life to history and lays the sure foundation of commercial, industrial, and political knowledge.’<sup>54</sup>

After Language, including literature in the vernacular and in Latin, and history, comes geography, including nature knowledge, ‘a co-ordination of the elementary aspects of many sciences’, climate, geology, economics, migration and so on. In fact Laurie seems to suggest that all human activity is essentially influenced by the nature of the places in which people live.<sup>55</sup> With the addition of arithmetic and mathematics, which Laurie describes as both utilitarian and disciplinary Laurie writes that, ‘We consider that we have now laid down all that is *necessary* for the thorough education of a mind.’<sup>56</sup> This, though, still leaves some spare time which Laurie would fill with French and German. Laurie states that this would mean that the curriculum would be full. However, he would then extend the day by the addition of singing and drawing on the basis that, ‘these subjects do not add to the weight to the curriculum but rather lighten it.’<sup>57</sup> This is surely an optimistic observation. Laurie's ideas as to what would constitute a proper curriculum at the various stages of education were therefore based firmly on his convictions as to the purpose of education. He made few concessions to the increasing importance of the sciences or to ‘technical’ education, by which he understood something akin to vocational training. The striking feature of this section of Laurie's work is that, although many of his underlying premises were open to question, and although he was aiming to present a coherent programme derived from the application of logic to these premises, what he actually suggested did not represent a major departure from what had traditionally been taught.

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 258

<sup>53</sup> Laurie, ‘Geography in the School’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 204

<sup>54</sup> Laurie, ‘Organization and Curriculum of Secondary Schools’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 166

<sup>55</sup> Laurie, ‘Geography in the School’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 200-219

<sup>56</sup> Laurie, ‘Organization and Curriculum of Secondary Schools’, *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 167

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 169

The third report of the Argyll Commission lists the fees which were payable for individual subjects in Grammar Schools in 1863 and the list comprises: Latin, Greek, arithmetic, bookkeeping, geography, Euclid, French, drawing, English and writing, arithmetic, history.<sup>58</sup> The same report records the answers given by Professors Blackie, Campbell and Geddes to the question, 'What subjects do you believe are best fitted for the education of the majority of scholars attending the burgh schools?':

Blackie: 'English Language, Geography, History, natural history music drawing sacred history and bible lessons, gymnastics, French and German languages, Latin and Greek, arithmetic and mathematics.'

Campbell: 'Latin, arithmetic, Euclid, reading and learning English poetry, English composition and grammar, history and geography intelligently taught, Higher class ought to make a beginning in Greek and French.'

Geddes: 'Classics, arithmetic and mathematics, English including geography and the outlines of history, French and German, natural history music and drawing.'<sup>59</sup>

Laurie's proposals on curriculum content were therefore neither original nor radical. Indeed, they were very much in line with the conventional wisdom of the day as expressed by his professorial contemporaries (though Laurie himself was not appointed to his chair until eight years or so after the publication of the Argyll report). It is also interesting to note that Comenius had himself recommended a curriculum for the Latin School, that is, from ages 12 to 18, comprising grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, astronomy, physics, geography, history, ethics and theology, which is not so very different from that being proposed by Scots Professors two and a half centuries later. The inescapable conclusion seems to be that Laurie, again, was a clear but not a radical thinker and that his ideas, being mainstream, cannot really be traced back to any particular writer or school of thought.

---

<sup>58</sup> PP1867-68 Vol XXXIX *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland, Third Report*, 353

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 186-199

## Chapter VI – Method

Laurie describes the doctrine of method as ‘the last chapter in the theory or science of the education of mind and the first chapter of the Art or practice of education’.<sup>1</sup> His ideas on method were intended to follow logically on from his understanding of psychology and to lead directly to school organisation and classroom practice. These ideas are to be found in his *Institutes of Education* which follows exactly that pattern. The major part of the book deals with Laurie's understanding of psychology. From this, he derives a set of ‘principles’ or ‘rules’ which are intended to govern the process by which information is imparted and learned. Laurie then considers the question of the authority of the teacher and of discipline in the behavioural sense. He also offers advice on how schools ought to be organised and on various aspects of classroom technique.

Laurie acknowledged that many of his principles had been in operation for a long time, though without the ‘scientific’ basis of psychology which he claimed to have. The implication is that many of the practical ‘rules’ for successful teaching had been evident to educationalists over the years and that the underpinning theory, while validating these ‘rules’, was not a prerequisite to discovering them. Laurie traces a direct line of thinking from Bacon, through Ratke to Comenius.<sup>2</sup> Bacon he describes as having been ‘the father of Realism’ adding, ‘Here we have the germ of much in Comenius.’ However, ‘It was not within Bacon’s purpose to elaborate his views in their specific relation to the ordinary school. This, as regards method at least, was left to Ratke.’ Of Ratke he writes, ‘He is in direct descent from Bacon.’ And, ‘time has substantially justified them [his ideas on method], and they meet us again in fuller development in the pages of his successor.’ This successor was Comenius who ‘seized the torch ere it fell to the ground’ and, says Laurie, ‘There are few of the now recognised rules of Method which will not in substance be found

---

<sup>1</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1892), 181

<sup>2</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), Introduction

in his writings.’<sup>3</sup> What matters here is not whether Laurie was right in his analysis of the contributions of Bacon, Ratke, and Comenius but that he himself took his inspiration from them.

### Process

The focus of this chapter is not on Laurie's understanding of psychology but on the practical suggestions he made with reference both to their antecedents and to how they can be seen in the context of ‘child-centred’ theory. [Although anachronistic, this term is useful when considering Laurie.]

Laurie believed, with Rousseau, that education should not be forced. It should be carefully matched to the pupil's developmental stage. With that in mind his first principle was that teachers should, ‘Present to sense.’<sup>4</sup> The aim here is to connect every new piece of information with the pupil's personal experience of the external world. This derives from the ‘scholastic maxim’ ‘Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu’ on which, Laurie tells us, both Bacon<sup>5</sup> and Comenius<sup>6</sup> rested their method. Rousseau, the ‘father of child-centred education’, also subscribed to this approach; ‘never substitute the sign for the thing,’ says Rousseau, ‘except when it is impossible to show the thing.’<sup>7</sup> Next, teachers should, ‘Teach first the salient and prominent characteristics before proceeding to others.’ Laurie adds a comment here to the effect that this is not only sound advice but ‘universally neglected’.<sup>8</sup> Again, the equivalent instruction can be found in Comenius and Laurie himself writes that among his leading principles of method was, ‘From the simple to the complex, from the particular to the general, the concrete before the abstract, and, all step by step’.<sup>9</sup> Not only should this be the order of progression but teachers should, ‘present one new thing at a time’ and, ‘connect the new with what is already in the mind’.<sup>10</sup> The first instruction could have come directly from Ratke, ‘not more than one thing of the same kind at the

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 32, 20, 30, 33, 38, 49, 50

<sup>4</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 151

<sup>5</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 14

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 255

<sup>7</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 151

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 158

<sup>9</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 255

<sup>10</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 213, 214

same time'.<sup>11</sup> and the second from Herbart who said that instruction should be presented in such a way that, 'that which comes later shall always find present the earlier knowledge with which it is to be united.'<sup>12</sup> Having carefully chosen the amount to be presented and the order of presentation and having connected new information with what has already been taught, it is then necessary to ensure that it is remembered. Teachers should, 'Cultivate the memory in accordance with the conditions of remembering.'<sup>13</sup> These conditions include, particularly: the vividness of the presentation, its duration and its frequency of presentation, together with its associations. In addition, Laurie stresses that it is important to 'repeat and re-repeat, revise and re-revise'.<sup>14</sup> Again, these instructions can be compared to Ratke, 'One thing often repeated'<sup>15</sup> and to Comenius, learning will only be possible, 'if knowledge be fixed in the memory by constant practice'.<sup>16</sup>

Thus Laurie believed that teaching should always be based on what the pupil was capable of comprehending; it should be measured and incremental; it should be based on a pupil's previous knowledge and experience; and it should be properly reinforced. And, significantly, the focus should always be on the learner, rather than on a perceived need to impart this or that particular body of knowledge. John Darling identifies this last as being of particular importance in child-centred education when he writes of that theory, 'their (teachers) job can no longer be one of imparting a fixed body of valuable knowledge.'<sup>17</sup>

### Discipline

Since for Laurie, the purpose of all education was ethical, it followed that the amount learned was of less importance than the development of the right moral attitudes. Laurie was therefore primarily concerned with the development of good habit and of conscience and it was this focus, together with his understanding of the nature of children, which informed his attitude towards punishment and rewards. Consequently, it is mainly from

---

<sup>11</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 39

<sup>12</sup> Herbart, *Outlines of Educational Doctrine*, tr. A. F Lange, (New York, 1901), 70

<sup>13</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 239

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 242

<sup>15</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 39

<sup>16</sup> Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, tr Keatinge, (London, 1910), 143

<sup>17</sup> J. Darling, *Child Centred Education and its Critics*, (London, 1994), 4

consideration of these attitudes that the picture of Laurie as, to some extent, 'child-centred' emerges. Perhaps the most significant comment Laurie makes in all of his writing on method comes when he says:

One might almost supersede all study of method if one could only secure this, that the teacher was able sympathetically to place himself in the mental attitude of the pupil towards the lesson and advance with him step by step to the full comprehension of it.<sup>18</sup>

This early exhortation to empathy, though of course Laurie does not use the word which the OED gives as having first come into use in 1912, is combined with a similar exhortation to his students to remember that, 'The child before you is not an incarnation of depravity.'<sup>19</sup>

Given this underlying attitude, it is not surprising that Laurie was, in general, an opponent of corporal punishment, though not an abolitionist. In this he was neither original nor alone. Comenius argued that, 'There is no power in stripes and blows to excite a love of literature, but a greater power, on the contrary, of generating weariness and disgust.'<sup>20</sup> and added that corporal punishment should be a 'last resort'.<sup>21</sup> Herbart's view was that, 'It would be vain to attempt to banish entirely corporal punishments usually administered after fruitless reprimands; but use should be made of them so sparingly that they be feared rather than actually inflicted.'<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps more tellingly, Laurie's mentor Pillans wrote a complete *Rationale of School Discipline*.<sup>23</sup> Laurie included two and a half pages taken from this as a footnote to his report to the Dick Bequest in 1865, describing Pillans as, 'one of the most eminent educationalists of this century'.<sup>24</sup> So it is reasonable to conclude that he shared the views which Pillans expressed. In this rationale we read that, 'a word or significant gesture will have more weight than ... heavy blows' and that boys can absorb corporal punishment and even get kudos out of it. However, he says that the dread of corporal punishment increases with its

---

<sup>18</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 191

<sup>19</sup> Laurie, 'The Respective Functions in Education of Primary, Secondary, and University Schools', *Educational Subjects*, (London, 1888), 9

<sup>20</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 164

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 198

<sup>22</sup> Herbart, *Outlines of Educational Doctrine*, tr. Lange and De Garmo, (London, 1901), 34

<sup>23</sup> Pillans, *Rationale of School Discipline*, (London, 1856)

<sup>24</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 170

rarity claiming, remarkably, that, ‘during the latter half of my Rectorship it was entirely discontinued.’<sup>25</sup> It was, of course, discontinued in practice, not in principle, though Pillans in a letter to T F Kennedy MP does specifically say that it is his ‘own decided opinion’ that corporal punishment should never be employed in school though it may be ‘necessary for moral lapses’.<sup>26</sup>

Thus Laurie had available to him many examples of writers who did not believe in corporal punishment, mainly on the grounds of efficiency. But, while he clearly endorsed these views, his own principal argument against it was in essence different. He presented a detailed set of criteria against which punishments should be measured, again drawing on Pillans in particular. They should be just and be seen by the pupils to be just, they should be the minimum necessary and they should be ‘prompt, sharp, decisive, and there end.’<sup>27</sup> Laurie himself makes it clear that he believes that corporal punishment does at least satisfy these conditions. Indeed, he goes further and says that although it is to be regarded as an ‘extreme measure ... There is a flagellation of the mind worse than any castigation of the body’. This is sarcasm which Laurie believes has no place in a school saying that it is ‘unconstitutional and justifies rebellion’.<sup>28</sup>

So it is that Laurie can say that there is a place for corporal punishment and that he has, ‘no sympathy with objections to flogging (if done in cold blood) on the score of cruelty or indignity. It is much more merciful to castigate a boy than to wear his nerves to exhaustion by appeals to sentiment, affection, or duty.’ and also produce a detailed argument against it which is not simply an extension of what Comenius, Herbart or Pillans had said previously. Laurie argued that its use degraded both punisher and punished and that the aim of all discipline is to develop ‘the conscience of the freeman, not of the slave’. It is therefore, ‘degrading both to the punished and the punisher to treat a child or a man as if he had forfeited his humanity.’<sup>29</sup> The true defect of corporal punishment lies not in the pain it inflicts, nor in the fact that boys can become inured to it. It lies in the implication that the

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 173

<sup>26</sup> Pillans, *Principles of Elementary Teaching*, (Edinburgh, 1828), 25

<sup>27</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 166

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 168

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 166, 167

master believes that the boy would respond to nothing else and must therefore be treated as if he were a 'savage' and no more could therefore be expected of him. Laurie was always anxious to ensure that no pupil should be dealt with in such a way as to lose his self-respect. 'There is so much to be said here on disapprobation that I prefer to say nothing save to repeat the words of Herbart, that we must never so censure as to cause a boy to lose all self-respect.'<sup>30</sup> Laurie is nothing if not pragmatic and he recognises that there are always going to be a few 'baser spirits'. 'They are not in themselves moral: they belong to the question of the enforcement of obedience *where all moral means fail*.'<sup>31</sup> For them corporal punishment will be necessary and he goes so far as to say that they should be considered as a separate category of pupil on whom it may be used, though he makes it clear that it must be possible to get out of this group as well as to get in to it. Laurie also acknowledges that, 'even the rare boy who likes study for its own sake is not always disposed to study.'<sup>32</sup> He therefore goes to considerable trouble to suggest alternatives to corporal punishment. He was very much against sarcasm and disliked 'poena-giving' on the grounds that it tends to go on too long, thus making both master and pupil dwell on the offence, and because it has the effect of turning the pupils against intellectual endeavour. He suggested that deprivation, for example of play time, is likely to be effective and placed great store by the simple act of disapproval which, he says, will work provided that the right relationship between teacher and taught has been established.

Of greater interest in attempting to understand Laurie's approach to children and to discipline, particularly with reference to child-centred theories, are the nine rules which he sets out. These are aimed at preventing the need for punishment in the first place. The teacher should: reverence childhood, the rules should not only be just but should be easily obeyed, more should not be demanded of children than they can reasonably be expected to give, the teacher should accept a little done well, he should trust his pupils and always give the pupil the benefit of the doubt. In addition he should act in such a way that the school will feel that they are obeying a moral law, rather than obeying him personally Finally, 'above all, let him do unto others, *even to children*, as he would that others should do unto him.' Laurie believed categorically that, with the exception of a few children who could not

---

<sup>30</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 234

<sup>31</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 377

<sup>32</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh 1865), 154



be reached, this approach would always work and that it would bring about good discipline and that it would do so for the right reasons. His advice to his students was simple and stark. If, after all these efforts at discipline have been tried, the pupils still fail to respond to the demands of the teacher, 'The answer is easy: the master is deficient in moral power, and must at once take himself out of the school into some other more congenial sphere of work.'<sup>33</sup>

As well as considering punishment Laurie considered incentive and concluded that, 'As to rewards, these are almost wholly unnecessary.'<sup>34</sup> Laurie saw competition and prizes as harmful in that they tended to give rise to 'petty feelings of a jealous and envious character' and to, 'all sorts of efforts being made to gain advantages – sometimes unfair advantages over others'.<sup>35</sup> Education by competition, he believed, was 'not liberal education; (but) education for a mean end'.<sup>36</sup> However, there was another, more compelling, argument against competition and rewards. This is the same as the argument he advanced against corporal punishment; to offer reward for doing something which is morally right is to insult the recipient by implying that he or she would not otherwise have done it. 'It (giving rewards) unmoralises the act. ... The boy resents, or ought to resent, your reward.'<sup>37</sup> It followed from this that 'all school prizes should be abolished'. Laurie then contradicts himself a mere nine pages further on in the same book. 'To give a special prize for a special piece of work is not, however (for obvious reasons), hurtful.'<sup>38</sup> Evidently, it is the pitting of one boy against another to which Laurie really objects. This was a radical view for the time and there is no evidence that it had a practical effect. Laurie acknowledges that there do have to be competitions in circumstances where, as for example with the Civil Service examinations, there are more candidates than there are available places, but in schools this is unnecessary. Instead he advocates 'emulation'. It is, he says, the master's task to foster this in his pupils.<sup>39</sup> With the example of the best to aim for, every pupil may be encouraged

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 170, 157

<sup>34</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 234

<sup>35</sup> Laurie, 'Examinations, Emulation, and Competition', *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 150

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 152

<sup>37</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 404

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 405, 413

<sup>39</sup> Laurie, 'Examination, Emulation, and Competition', *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 153

to his or her best and, in order to assist with this aim, 'The work of class should be within the capacity of all in that class.' Laurie suggests that a 'certificate or card should be given to each which should recognise his merits,' because, 'Recognition, moral and intellectual is not for the few but for all.'<sup>40</sup>

### Organisation

Laurie writes that, 'Comenius was consequently right in maintaining that a considerable number could be taught in one class.'<sup>41</sup> He reports Comenius as having said that the first thing which would have to be done to make this possible would be to ensure that, 'those pupils only be admitted into the same class who are of equal advancement'.<sup>42</sup> Laurie writes approvingly of this but carries the idea much further. He makes it clear that it is the duty of the teacher to 'come into personal contact with every pupil on each subject of study'<sup>43</sup> every day and that the only way to do this is to arrange them into five sets with 'an equal amount of acquisition in respect of certain technical accomplishments'<sup>44</sup> in each. This was not a new idea. Others, including Herbart also subscribed to it.<sup>45</sup> However, it was not universal practice and Laurie developed it more fully in its practical implications. He makes it clear in a circular to schoolmasters in the north east that the purpose of this classification is to 'secure for him, *that kind of teaching* for which he is best fitted.'<sup>46</sup>

With five sets and several subjects in the course of the day, it became imperative that there should be a precise timetable. Laurie advocated dividing the day into fifteen minute segments and said that the teacher should be able to 'tell what each group, and each pupil in the group, ought to be doing at any point in the course of the school day.'<sup>47</sup> The idea of having a timetable was not new. Allan Menzies wrote that 'every class should have a distinctively defined duty for each successive hour or other period of time'<sup>48</sup> but Laurie

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 154

<sup>41</sup> Laurie, *John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1899), 131

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 168

<sup>43</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh 1865), 147

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 148

<sup>45</sup> Herbart, *Outlines of Educational Doctrine*, tr. Lange and De Garmo, (London, 1901), 112

<sup>46</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh 1865), 288

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 149

<sup>48</sup> Menzies, *Report to the Trustees on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 260

refined it and took it further in practical terms. Laurie records that, when he began his visits to the Dick bequest schools, almost no-one operated to a timetable. The Trustees therefore sent round a skeleton timetable and made it a condition for an award that it should be used. Although there is no record of the fact, it was clearly Laurie who drew up this skeleton timetable. This alone will have had a galvanising effect on the organisation of school work in these schools and can be counted as a significant achievement.

Laurie believed that: it was important to consider the intellectual and developmental stage of the child rather than simply to press on that it was important to build in periods of physical activity and/or play, that the aim of all education was to enable each child to realise self – rather than to impart this or that particular set of facts, that corporal punishment was wrong on the grounds of its degrading effect, that competition was harmful and that all children should be recognised for what they can do rather than penalised for what they cannot do. Although each of these ideas taken in isolation can be shown not to have been original he developed them more fully than his predecessors and presented them more coherently. Taken as a whole, Laurie's views add up to a clear exposition of an approach which can be said to have been 'child-centred' and which had not previously been presented in quite that form.

Why then is he not subsequently mentioned as a factor in the development of these theories? Harold Entwistle and John Darling, writing about educational theory in both Scotland and England in the 1960s and 70s, trace the origins of 'child-centred education' to Rousseau. Thus Entwistle, 'It was with Rousseau that there entered into educational thought an entirely new emphasis.'<sup>49</sup> and Darling, 'Today's child-centred thinking will be shown to be the fruition of ideas developed by philosophers like Rousseau and Dewey.'<sup>50</sup> Each writer then cites Pestalozzi and Froebel, who predated Laurie, and Dewey whose writing career for the most part post-dated him, as the educationalists who were most influential in developing the ideas further. Neither writer mentions Laurie either in the text or in the bibliographies.

---

<sup>49</sup> H Entwistle, *Child-Centred Education*, (London, 1970), 11

<sup>50</sup> Darling, *Child Centred Education and its Critics*, (London, 1994), vii

If, as is suggested by the evidence above, Laurie was a powerful advocate for a child-centred approach to teaching and if, as is evident from Laurie's career and the list of his publications, he was a prominent and respected educationalist, it might have been expected that he would have occupied a more prominent place in the history of educational ideas as it has come to be written over the century following his death. It is impossible to know why this should not have been so but there are two factors which may have contributed to Laurie being overlooked in this way. There is a major strand in the thinking of child centred theorists which asserts not just that the developmental stage of the child and the psychology of learning must be taken into account, but that the rights and freedom of the individual child are also of great importance.<sup>51</sup> In its most advanced form, this means that the exercise of authority, is always wrong, even the selection of particular material for study. On this model, the teacher is something akin to a facilitator rather than a source of information or direction. He or she must not suggest ideas or value judgements but must always enable children to apply reason to their own experiences and thus develop these themselves. This is an extreme position to adopt, but if it represents one end of the spectrum of child centred theory then at least some of Laurie's pronouncements represent the other. On authority, Laurie held that, 'The mere obedience to school rules, however trivial, simply because they are rules and proceed from a recognised authority, is in itself a moral act.'<sup>52</sup> And he certainly also believed in the centrality of the teacher to the whole process. 'As is the teacher so is the school.'<sup>53</sup> On these issues Laurie was again articulating a set of ideas which had been expressed before and he was therefore not putting forward anything which would lead to a radically new approach.

The key to the second possible explanation of the comparative neglect of Laurie in this context may be found in Darling's book. In it he writes that, 'Child-centred (or progressive) educational theory has to be understood as stemming from radical dissatisfaction with traditional practice.'<sup>54</sup> Laurie was never a radical. He may, in many respects, have been progressive but he always worked within the system for its gradual improvement, as befitted someone who was an employee of the Church of Scotland and the Dick bequest

---

<sup>51</sup> Entwistle, *Child-Centred Education*, (London, 1970), Ch 4

<sup>52</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 151

<sup>53</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London, 1892), 9

<sup>54</sup> Darling, *Child Centred Education and its Critics*, (London, 1994), 2

trust, both 'establishment' institutions, for so long. In addition, there was an almost quasi-religious dimension to the way in which some advocates for child centred education viewed their cause and writers such as Rousseau and Pestalozzi acquired an evangelical following. For example, Froebel, who visited Pestalozzi, took up some of his ideas and inspired a movement leading to the foundation of the 'Froebel Society' in 1874. Darling argues that it was this, rather than his writing, which led to his name and his methods becoming so well known.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps because of the way in which Laurie presented his ideas, those outlined above were expressed for the most part in his first report to the trustees of the Dick bequest, which is hardly a likely vehicle for evangelism, but also because of his lack of true originality, Laurie never attracted such followers.

Thus, the argument having been made that Laurie was 'child-centred' in his approach and that it is surprising that he has not been acknowledged more widely as having been a factor in the development of such theories, a counter argument can be made to the effect that he was not. The truth no doubt lies somewhere between the two extremes. If being 'child centred' means having an acute awareness of the need to consider the psychology of children when developing a practical educational philosophy, there can be no doubt that Laurie belongs in that tradition. If it means elevating the wishes and freedom of the child above that of the teacher, he certainly does not. In any case, Laurie was, as always, pragmatic in his approach. He was interested in developing an approach which he believed would be effective in bringing about what he saw as the proper 'aims' for education but he himself wrote that 'it is possible to overdo method'.<sup>56</sup> This may have lessened the likelihood of there being a 'school of Laurie' dedicated to carrying forward his ideas. On the other hand, he lectured to students over some thirty years, his books became, as R. D. Anderson writes, 'standard fare in the training colleges',<sup>57</sup> and for half a century he inspected schools in the north east, having considerable influence on how they were actually run, and had a powerful influence over the educational policies of the Church of Scotland.

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 24

<sup>56</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899), 190

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People 1750-1918*, (Oxford, 1995), 197

Thus Laurie, through his writing, lecturing and work with the Dick bequest, had a considerable influence on the way in which teachers in Scotland approached their task, in other words on the development of method. This influence is undoubted and does not depend on whether Laurie's approach should be categorised as 'child-centred' or not. Nor is his influence in some way diminished by the fact that Laurie's approach to method in teaching was evolutionary not revolutionary or that he developed ideas which were already taking hold and spread them widely throughout the profession rather than propounding truly original ideas of his own. His true legacy was in the work he did during his lifetime and the fact that it is not now remembered more widely is surely as a consequence of that lack of originality and consequent lack of avowed followers.

## Chapter VII - Dick Bequest

### Introduction

The Dick bequest was set up in 1833 in accordance with the wishes of James Dick, a merchant, who had made his fortune in Jamaica. When he died he left almost all his money ‘to the maintenance and assistance of “the Country Parochial Schoolmasters” in his native County of Elgin or Moray, and in the neighbouring Counties of Banff and Aberdeen.’<sup>1</sup> Dick’s belief was that the calibre of the schoolmaster was the single most important influence on the quality of the education in any school and that, given the right calibre of schoolmaster, the teaching of the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic is likely to be enhanced rather than displaced by the presence of advanced subjects in the parochial school. The trustees were therefore enjoined to use the monies in the way which, ‘shall seem most likely to encourage active schoolmasters, and gradually to elevate the literary character of the Parochial Schoolmasters and Schools aforesaid’.<sup>2</sup>

The object of the bequest was to provide an incentive which would lead to an improvement in the quality of education available in the parochial schools, and, perhaps believing that the parochial schools were already threatened by the expanding burghs even as early as 1830, or perhaps simply realising that even his fortune would have less effect if spread too thinly, Dick limited the number of schoolmasters who would be eligible to benefit by restricting his bequest to the three aforementioned counties; those in the royal burghs were to be excluded. He was also sufficiently wise in the ways of men to realise that unless safeguards were put in place the monies would simply be swallowed up and would be likely not to reach the Schoolmasters themselves. He therefore decreed that the bequest should ‘not (be used) in any manner (to) relieve the Heritors from their legal obligations to support Parochial Schoolmasters, or (to) diminish the extent of such support’. Dick also believed that the schoolmasters, once having received the grant, should not be allowed

---

<sup>1</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 10

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 14

simply to sit back and rest on their laurels. The grant should therefore be reviewable every year conditional on continued performance and the trustees should have the power to 'increase, diminish, or altogether to discontinue, the salary or allowance to be from time to time made to all or any of such Schoolmasters, without being accountable for so doing.' Dick did not specify the means whereby the trustees were to achieve a proper distribution of the monies. He did, however, recommend that they, 'pay great attention to the qualifications and diligence of the several Parochial Schoolmasters' and that they, 'take care, at the same time, that the common branches of education are properly attended to at the said Parochial Schools'.<sup>3</sup>

From the inception of the scheme, the trustees determined that the best way to ensure that Dick's wishes were carried out was by the twin expedients of examination and inspection. Although a university degree was not specified, the standard of the examination which individual schoolmasters had to undergo to qualify for a grant from the bequest was such that it was almost inevitable that only those with a university education, and probably having graduated, would have a realistic chance of passing it. Indeed, in his *Historical Sketch* at the beginning of his *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest* in 1890, Laurie writes, 'That the standard of "pass" in the Dick bequest examination is sufficiently high is testified by the fact that graduates of Aberdeen are frequently cast in their first attempts.'<sup>4</sup>

The first visitor and secretary to the Dick bequest trust was Allan Menzies and he it was who established the way in which the trust would operate not just during his own tenure, from 1833 till 1855, but also throughout the first thirty five or so years of Laurie's. Both Menzies and Laurie wrote reports to the trustees in which they included their philosophy of education and also ideas about practical details such as methods, competition and timetables. Use has already been made in Part 1 of this thesis of Laurie's 1865 Report to help to establish his ideas on these and other educational issues. However, it is relevant to note Menzies' ideas on the same issues for comparison purposes. In this way it will be possible to indicate the extent to which Laurie brought either continuity or a new philosophy to the work of the bequest.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 13, 14

<sup>4</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 12



### Aim of Education

Menzies believed that the purpose of education was to prepare not just for this earthly life but for the life hereafter. 'The design of Education is to prepare for the whole duration of existence.' and, 'It is evident that education must have a reference not only to this life and its interests, but to the unseen future also.'<sup>5</sup> Therefore, 'The true aim is to form the man by drawing forth his moral and intellectual faculties, and moulding and nourishing them by direction and exercise towards their highest capability, so that the end of his being may be attained.'<sup>6</sup> This accords closely to Laurie's assertion of self-realisation as the aim of life itself and, therefore, of education and his belief that, 'The whole method of education contemplates the end and aim as dominant and first; and that end is the spiritual life.'<sup>7</sup> The purpose of the parochial school therefore must be to promote these aims to the fullest extent possible. As Menzies put it:

The School cannot be limited to the lowest elements of instruction ... if we look to the variety of human gifts ... it is plain that no arbitrary limit can wisely or safely be assigned to the education of the Parish School, and that the greater the amount of sound moral and intellectual cultivation which it can impart ... the more effectually does it accomplish its noble function, and commend itself as an instrument of invaluable blessing to the community.<sup>8</sup>

He makes it clear that, when arguing for advanced instruction in the parochial school, he is not thinking purely in terms of 'getting on'. Indeed, the 'noble function' is to be measured in moral, rather than material, terms. 'The true aim is to form the man by drawing forth his moral and intellectual faculties, and moulding and nourishing them by direction and exercise towards their highest capability, so that the end of his being may be attained.'<sup>9</sup> Here again, there is a remarkable degree of agreement between Menzies and Laurie, who, as has been seen (ch. IV), makes it clear that the realisation of humanity, rather than the

---

<sup>5</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 211 -212

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 275

<sup>7</sup> Laurie, 'The Schoolmaster and University Training Colleges in England', *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 93

<sup>8</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 222

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 275

acquisition of knowledge, is what is important and that 'the more education a man has ... the better citizen he will be ... better will he do even the humblest work.'<sup>10</sup>

Laurie also agreed with Menzies' implied comments about the value of higher subjects to the community as well as to those who were actually studying them:

The existence of some pupils studying higher subjects within a school is of benefit not just to those who are studying them but to the school as a whole and by extension to the community and therefore the country. Schools which teach higher subjects teach the elementary ones better. The standard of expectation is raised in all parents because of what they see as being possible.<sup>11</sup>

### The importance of the Schoolmaster

Dick's decision to focus his attention and resources on the schoolmasters themselves was in contrast to other endowments and bequests which sought to bring benefit by using their money for bursaries for individual pupils, to enable them to have an education which would otherwise have been denied to them. His underlying belief that it is the teachers who determine the culture and performance within a school was shared by both Menzies and Laurie. As Menzies puts it, 'The spirit and character of the teacher are the creative power of the school.'<sup>12</sup> He is so keen to underline this point that he repeats it in a slightly different form later in his report. 'It is the character of the teacher which determines the character of the school.'<sup>13</sup> Laurie says much the same thing more than once in his writings. Having said that the nature of the teacher determines the nature of the school he asserts that the character of the teacher is more important than his professional skills. 'Character without methods never fails of at least partial success; but the most clearly conceived ideal and the most skilful methods, without the element of personal character, will, however successful in particular directions, invariably fail to attain the great object of the school.'<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Laurie believed, in accordance with Dick's own view, that highly qualified schoolmasters would bring with them the necessary qualities of character going so far as to

---

<sup>10</sup> Laurie, 'General Function of the Primary School', *Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 118

<sup>11</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 35

<sup>12</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 224

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 281

<sup>14</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 26

state that, 'Superior scholarship is only an exhibition, in a specific direction, of superior qualities of the intellectual and moral nature as a whole.' Laurie was not claiming that intellectual achievement carries with it any necessary concomitant moral worth. He was arguing that intellectual achievement would be impossible without having underlying qualities of willingness to learn and a capacity for hard work and perseverance. It would be these qualities which would guarantee superior moral worth – in addition to, not as a consequence of, intellectual ones. Thus:

University men not only bring higher accomplishments and more disciplined powers to the work of the school; they also bring that force of character which tends to reproduce itself in those committed to their care ... it stands to reason that a lad who has had to fight his way to the University gives a guarantee in that very fact that he possesses the moral qualifications for the work of a teacher, which must be altogether wanting in the young man who, from the age of thirteen, has been a protégé of the Government, whose every step has been made easy, and for whom perfect security has at every stage been carefully insured, as if by a paternal hand.<sup>15</sup>

Here Laurie is dismissing, somewhat harshly, those who had attained the status of teacher through the pupil teacher and the normal school systems. Menzies and Laurie repeatedly stress that it is character and not acquired knowledge or skill which matters. So Menzies states that, 'The best educated are not those who have been the most replenished with information, but those whose faculties have been most successfully evolved, and trained to independent and energetic action.'<sup>16</sup> Ten years later Laurie asserts that, 'The teacher must bear in mind that life from first to last is a progress and a struggle, and that the purpose of education is not to give possession of a certain quantity of facts of the understanding, or even of principles of morality, but of powers; not the conferring of attainment, but the qualifying for pursuit.'<sup>17</sup> Both, of course, acknowledged the need for the acquisition of facts but this acquisition is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

#### Qualities required in a Schoolmaster

Menzies sums up the qualities needed in a teacher with admirable economy of words. 'There are three important qualities for a teacher: Piety; Mental Power; Natural Aptitude.'<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 227, 311, 312

<sup>16</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 275

<sup>17</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 178

<sup>18</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 224

Laurie nowhere expresses it as neatly but he evidently agrees entirely, particularly with the first two requirements: 'What he morally is, that the schoolmaster morally does.'<sup>19</sup> and, 'They must know thoroughly what they propose to teach.'<sup>20</sup> Laurie agreed that natural aptitude was desirable but he was, as usual, a little more pragmatic: 'The greatest teachers in the world have been born teachers. But this is simply to say that there is such a thing as educational genius, just as there is genius in other departments.'<sup>21</sup> He did nevertheless add that, 'We cannot afford to close the ranks of the teaching profession against all save those whose true vocation it is.'<sup>22</sup> However, this was not, to Laurie's mind, a real problem in terms of teacher supply since he believed that with the right training, it is relatively easy to 'manufacture' teachers given the right material. In his evidence to the committee charged with inquiring into Scottish education in 1888 Laurie stated, 'A man who has got a head on his shoulders and knows something of the principles and methods of education, can very quickly take up all the points of teaching a class and the organisation of a school.'<sup>23</sup>

Laurie was, of course, dedicated to the idea that teachers ought to be trained and his work in this area is dealt with in chapters XII, XIII, and XIV. Suffice it here to say that he believed that the ideal preparation for teaching was a combination of training and a university education:

Those Schoolmasters who have received their preparation for their work in our Normal Colleges certainly exhibit, in the very first year of their professional life, a capacity for organisation, a knowledge of good methods, and a skill in teaching, which University men may attain only after many years of conscientious labour.<sup>24</sup> ... On the other hand, the University men not only bring higher accomplishments and more disciplined powers to the work of the school; they also bring that force of character which tends to reproduce itself in those in their care.<sup>25</sup>

These views corresponded very closely with those of Menzies:

---

<sup>19</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 27

<sup>20</sup> Laurie, 'Method and the Sunday School Teacher', *Teachers' Guild Addresses*, (London, 1892), 70

<sup>21</sup> Laurie, 'The Philosophy of Mind and the Training of Teachers', *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 59

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> PP 1888 Vol XLI, *Committee to inquire into Questions relating to Education in Scotland, Third Report, Minutes of Evidence*, 30

<sup>24</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 310

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 311

Most of the newly appointed Schoolmasters are thus Graduates in Arts, and, with rare exceptions, either Licentiates of the Church, or Students of Divinity. In demanding respectable attainments, therefore, the bequest is merely asking what is an indispensable qualification for the highest ulterior object in life.<sup>26</sup>

Like Laurie, Menzies makes it clear that he views training as important. In his 1844 report he writes, ‘in general and elsewhere the want of Model or Training Schools may be felt and complained of.’<sup>27</sup>

### Curriculum Content

Thus Menzies and Laurie agreed on all the fundamental principles on which the Dick bequest was to be administered. They also agreed to a large extent on what should be included in the curriculum. For them both, the teaching of religion was in a separate category from the teaching of anything else because it is religion which gives purpose and meaning to all human endeavour. Without it all activity would be merely mechanical. Thus Menzies, ‘The first of these (religious culture) manifestly cannot be dissevered from the second culture (for life) without depriving the most important part of education for life – viz., moral habit and duty – of the authority and influence of their Divine origin.’<sup>28</sup> and Laurie, ‘To teach morality in its infinite ramifications ... with constant reference to God who created us ... is the highest duty of the schoolmaster.’<sup>29</sup> Laurie also wrote that, ‘This idea, (the idea of God), let us remember, is to be to the child the basis of his future religious life.’<sup>30</sup> For both men the success of religious instruction will depend directly on the character of the teacher; ‘The efficacy of Religious Instruction depends upon sincerity in the Teacher.’<sup>31</sup> and ‘No less important than the substance and order of religious teaching is fitness of manner in the teacher.’<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 26

<sup>27</sup> Menzies, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1844), 228

<sup>28</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 217

<sup>29</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 196

<sup>30</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 197

<sup>31</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 300

<sup>32</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 203

Apart from religion, both Menzies and Laurie continued to stress that individual bodies of knowledge were not, of themselves, crucial. So Menzies wrote of English literature, 'The true object is not so much the giving of information as the development of mind.'<sup>33</sup> and Laurie of knowledge in general, 'All special knowledges are of value only in so far as they contribute to the supreme ethical result.'<sup>34</sup> This is not to deny that factual knowledge is required; it is to assert that no subject has intrinsic merit over others unless it can be shown to be more effective in promoting the ethical end. Classics are of value because they give access to classical literature which is held to contain insights and wisdom which are valuable but languages themselves are merely tools which must be mastered in order to access the benefits. 'In Classical study there is apt to be too little regard to the nature and tendency of what is read, - as regards its relation to truth, especially revealed truth.'<sup>35</sup> Geography is important because it deals with the physical context within which we are to realise ourselves. Menzies thought it the most accessible of the subjects taught at an early age and Laurie believed it to be potentially the most interesting. 'There is not a department of knowledge which children are at an early age more capable of acquiring than Geography.'<sup>36</sup> 'Geography, properly taught, would be the most interesting and, with the single exception of Literature, probably the most nutritive and most cultivating, although defective as a discipline.'<sup>37</sup> In parenthesis it should be noted that Laurie understood geography to be an extremely wide-ranging subject. It would have included not just physical but human geography, effectively comprehending modern subjects such as economics and sociology as well as botany and perhaps even biology. His consistent advocacy of geography as an important part of education might be held to go some way towards mitigating what could be seen as a reactionary attitude on his part in resisting the introduction of science. 'Science is sufficiently represented in the nature-knowledge included under the head of Geography. The theory of Chemistry and the

---

<sup>33</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 338

<sup>34</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education* (Edinburgh, 1892), 17

<sup>35</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 370

<sup>36</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 126

<sup>37</sup> Laurie, 'Geography in the School', *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901), 201

abstractions of Physics are not more educative than the learning of a Greek verb.’<sup>38</sup> He was always afraid that the pressure to include scientific and technical subjects in the curriculum would drive out the traditional ones, which he saw as being more important as far as the ethical end was concerned.

Neither Menzies nor Laurie was against practical subjects; nor were they against the acquisition of factual knowledge but they were always concerned that sight should not be lost of the main aim and that where knowledge was to be learned, in any subject, it was important to remember what it was for; that is, as part of the ethical process and not either for its own sake or for some worldly benefit.

### Classroom management

Menzies also paved the way for Laurie in suggesting improvements to several important practical aspects of classroom management. He pointed out that, ‘The power to examine is an essential part of good teaching.’<sup>39</sup> explaining that, ‘good examining is a process in which by suitable questions, the author’s idea presents itself in a manner modified and adapted to the pupil’s powers, so that he shall apprehend it quite independently of the author’s phraseology.’<sup>40</sup> Whilst this was not a new idea it sits well with Laurie’s ‘We need to study these days the art of examining.’<sup>41</sup> More remarkably, since it was not at the time common practice, Menzies advocates the use of ‘diagnostic testing’ to place pupils new to a school in the most appropriate group according to what they knew and not according solely to how long they were said to have been at a previous school:

If a pupil in such circumstances is to be classed with others, he ought to take his place, not according to the time during which he may have attended School formerly, but according to what the Schoolmaster may, by actual examination, ascertain to be the existing state of his attainments.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Laurie, ‘Organization of the Curriculum of Secondary Schools in Great Britain’, *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 76

<sup>39</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 346

<sup>40</sup> Ibid,

<sup>41</sup> Laurie, ‘Examinations, Emulation, and Competition’, *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 159

<sup>42</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 261

This is evidence of a forward looking approach by Menzies which is further supported by his introduction of the idea, on which Laurie was later able to build, of a timetable in Dick bequest schools. Remarkably, these timetables included short breaks because Menzies realised that they were needed if young pupils were to be able to sustain their concentration. 'The judicious Teacher will study what is peculiarly important in the case of very young pupils, viz., the necessity of occasional relief by varying the position.'<sup>43</sup> This was something to which Laurie also referred:

If sustained attention is to be expected from children, the continuous strain of the same subject ought to be limited to fifteen minutes, except in circumstances of peculiar interest. The intervals of entire relaxation again ought to be frequent however short. In matters of morality he must avoid making demands on the powers and obedience of the young greater than they can easily respond to.<sup>44</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn here is not necessarily that Menzies was exceptional, though he was forward looking, but that Laurie's ideas, though often more cogently expressed – and expressed cogently more often – were not original. This is not to devalue them and, given that Laurie found it necessary to re-state many of them in his successive reports to the trustees, it is evident that whether or not the ideas were well known by the time Laurie came to be the bequest's Visitor, their application was far from universal.

Thus it is clear that, even though all of Laurie's educational writing lay in the future at the time of his appointment as visitor, and even though the trustees must, to a certain extent, have made the appointment out of faith in what he would be able to do rather than evidence of what he had already achieved, in choosing Laurie they chose someone who would fully uphold the philosophy of the bequest and would provide continuity with the previous holder of the post. Again, therefore, it is possible to regard Laurie as thoughtful, enlightened, and forward looking but developing rather than creating ideas and as being content to work within an established framework rather than being truly radical.

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 266

<sup>44</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 153



### Practical effect of the Dick bequest

Having considered Laurie's ideas in the context of the Dick bequest from a theoretical point of view the logical follow-on is to ask whether or not the application of them did indeed serve to promote Dick's aims. This is a difficult task because the 'literary character' of school would be hard to assess and, even if uptake of advanced subjects and progression to university were taken as a measure, the only statistics available for the period are patchy and unreliable. In addition it is impossible to be sure which influences brought about particular changes. Nevertheless, a complete picture of Laurie's practical importance could not be presented without consideration of this question.

The aim of the bequest was to raise the literary character of schools by attracting the best and best qualified schoolmasters. It is difficult to gauge whether or not the trustees achieved this objective but certainly they had very considerable sums of money available for the purpose. The original bequest amounted to almost £119,000 and the income of between £3,300 and £5,500 per annum was equivalent to the combined salaries of the 137 schoolmasters in the three counties.<sup>45</sup> In his 1844 Report, Menzies tells us that:

A remarkable change has taken place in the emoluments of the Schoolmasters of the three counties since the introduction of the bequest in 1833. Their ordinary sources of income, viz., the salary and School fees, are now more productive than they were twenty years since, the average amount being now £10 13s 2d larger than in 1833, and adding emoluments from other sources, and the annual value of accommodations at both periods, the yearly worth of the office has risen from £55 12s 5d to £101 1s 7d, including in the latter sum the allowance from this bequest.<sup>46</sup>

In practice, this meant that the amount by which the bequest raised salaries would have been between about one third and one half although by 1890 this proportion had significantly reduced. 'The emoluments of teachers, apart from the bequest, which yields an addition of from £20 to £35, average £140 per annum, in addition to a house.'<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Cruickshank, 'The Dick Bequest', *History of Education Quarterly*, 1965, Vol 5 No 3, 154

<sup>46</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1844), 184

<sup>47</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 79

Several surveys were conducted at intervals during the nineteenth century but these tended to focus on such issues as school attendance and the uptake of different subjects and did not clearly establish the qualifications of the school masters in the various regions. In addition, successive inquiries did not ask the same questions nor did they always collect the answers in the same way, making comparisons between years unreliable. That said, the best sources for comparison are probably the results of a survey conducted by questionnaire in 1838 and published in the form of a report to parliament in 1841<sup>48</sup> and the second Argyll Commission report in 1867. Responses to the 1838 questionnaire were received from a total of 3244 schools, which were separated out into 'schools not parochial' and 'schools parochial'. This is useful because it related to a time very near the beginning of the operation of the bequest before any of its effects could have been expected to manifest themselves in the figures. The Argyll Commission took evidence from a wide range of people involved in education and relied heavily on the census carried out in 1861. This stands as a useful comparison partly because no such comprehensive survey was later carried out and because it analysed the situation before the passing of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, which made education compulsory, and before the effects of the Revised Code were properly felt in Scotland. By the time of the Argyll Commission, the bequest had been operating for thirty years and it is reasonable to suggest that any effect it was likely to have would have shown itself by then. It is also reasonable to suggest that comparison with later dates would be so overlaid with the effects of the Act and the codes and social change, such as urbanisation, as to be almost meaningless.

#### Qualifications of Schoolmasters

The relevant question with regard to the qualifications of schoolmasters in the 1838 questionnaire was, 'Where was the present teacher educated?'<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, there is considerable latitude in the potential answers to this. For example, some gave simple answers such as 'in Glasgow' whereas others stated, 'at Glasgow University' and others still replied, 'Graduated from Glasgow University'. It is therefore not possible to be sure about the accuracy of any analysis. It is possible that some of those who stated that they

---

<sup>48</sup> PP1841 Vol XIX, *Abstract of Answers by Schoolmasters in Scotland to Questionnaire 1838*,

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 779

were educated in a university town were actually at the university, without saying so. However, it does seem likely that those who did attend university would have wanted to draw attention to the fact. In any case, if there were discrepancies they would be likely to be spread fairly evenly across the returns so that comparisons would, in broad terms, remain valid. Furthermore, the returns included schools where the teacher was female, in which case they would not have been able to attend university. It should also be noted that some schools had more than one teacher, in which case either, or neither, or both may have attended university. For present purposes, therefore, it is schools and not individuals which have been counted.

The proportion of ‘schools not parochial’ in the counties of Aberdeen (including Aberdeen City), Banff and Elgin<sup>50</sup> with at least one teacher who had attended university for some part of his education was 19.9%. This compares with 12.9% for the rest of the country. Clearly schools in the north east were better supplied with more ‘academic’ teachers than the rest of the country. However, the figures relating to ‘schools parochial’ are much more dramatic. Here 81.2% of schools in Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin had the services of at least one ‘university man’ whereas only 41.8% of the rest of the country did.<sup>51</sup> Even if these figures are likely to be inaccurate, it does seem to be incontrovertible that schools in the north east already had more university men teaching in them than did the rest of the country at the time when the Dick bequest started to operate in the area. The bequest could not therefore claim sole responsibility for any subsequent demonstrable imbalance. Indeed Menzies himself asserts that:

Various circumstances have combined to heighten and sustain the respectability of the Parochial Schoolmasters of Aberdeen, Banff and Moray, in so far as their status in society, and literary qualifications are concerned. A large proportion of them are students of Divinity, or preachers; and ... it has certainly been instrumental in securing, where it has taken place, a higher social status, as well as more extensive attainments in learning in the teacher than the slender endowments of a Parochial School could otherwise command.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> The 1838 survey does not recognise the county of Moray and Elgin is here taken to be the nearest equivalent.

<sup>51</sup> PP1841 Vol XIX, *Extracted from Abstract of Answers by Schoolmasters in Scotland to Questionnaire 1838*

<sup>52</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1835), 71

He went on to suggest that the bursary system at Aberdeen University was especially influential.<sup>53</sup> That this is likely is supported by examination of the comparable figures for Kincardineshire. This is the county which is directly south-west of Aberdeen. The 1838 questionnaire shows that, remarkably, 18 out of the 19 parochial schools in Kincardineshire which replied had at least one 'university man' teaching in them.

By 1854 Menzies is reporting that, 'of the 88 Schoolmasters appointed since 1843, 69 are licentiates of the Church or are studying to obtain licence.'<sup>54</sup> By 1865 Laurie is claiming that, 'The teachers of the north eastern counties are almost without exception graduates of the University of Aberdeen.'<sup>55</sup>

The statistical report arising out of the Argyll Commission shows that 20% of the teachers in Aberdeenshire and Elginshire were men with both normal school training and a university degree compared with only 3.6% for the whole of Scotland.<sup>56</sup> [Banff did not submit a return and there are no figures for those with degrees but without normal school training.] HMI Kerr in his evidence to the Endowed Schools Commission in 1875 states that, 'out of 150 teachers in Aberdeen, Banff and Moray at least 130 are Masters of Arts. You will find that nowhere else in Scotland. Elsewhere in Scotland you will find not one in 50.'<sup>57</sup> When the Endowed Schools Commission reported in 1875 it noted that:

With such advantages the general standard of attainments and efficiency has been raised higher among the teachers of elementary schools in these three north-eastern counties than in the rest of Scotland. They are all university men, and, with very few exceptions, graduates in Arts; a considerable proportion of them also are licentiates in Theology; and the qualification required for sharing in this bequest is said to be higher than the M.A. degree of Aberdeen.<sup>58</sup>

Although it is impossible to compare any possible effect of the bequest on the qualifications of north east schoolmasters with those in the rest of the country, some

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 113

<sup>55</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 310

<sup>56</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland) Statistical Report, Appendix*, 9

<sup>57</sup> PP 1875 Vol XXIX, *Third Report of the Royal Commission into Endowed Schools in Scotland*, 215-216

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 121

tentative conclusions can be drawn from Menzies' and Laurie's reports about its effect within Dick bequest schools themselves:

- 1835 117 out of the 123 which had sent in returns had university men as Schoolmasters.<sup>59</sup>  
 1854 Of the 88 who made returns between 1843 and 1854, 85 had attended university.<sup>60</sup>  
 1865 'The teachers of the north-eastern counties are almost without exception graduates of the University of Aberdeen.'<sup>61</sup>  
 1890 112 of the 123 participating are graduates and have passed the exam.<sup>62</sup>

From 1890 onwards it was a condition of the admission of a school to the scheme that the headmaster should be a graduate.<sup>63</sup>

It is clear that the north east enjoyed a teaching workforce which was better qualified, in terms of attendance at university, than did the rest of the country and from the evidence, such as it is, it seems that the Dick bequest must have helped to sustain this situation and to ensure that the profession of schoolmaster in that part of the country was a more comfortable and better respected one than elsewhere. At the same time, it was clearly operating in an area which already receptive to its ideas and ethos and hence cannot be described as the sole cause of such a well qualified set of teachers, given that conditions clearly existed for this in the region before the bequest came into operation.

As a footnote, it is interesting to note that it was one of the original aims of the trustees to attract good teachers from elsewhere.<sup>64</sup> However, these efforts were largely in vain. 'The Reporter is aware, that one or two attempts have been made, by advertising vacancies, to attract eminent Teachers to Schools within the three Counties; but these, from whatever cause, have proved unsuccessful.'<sup>65</sup> This suggests either that the supply of such teachers elsewhere was limited or perhaps that the financial inducements offered by the Dick

---

<sup>59</sup> Menzies, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1844)

<sup>60</sup> Menzies, *Report on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854), 202

<sup>61</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 310

<sup>62</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 79

<sup>63</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1904), 5

<sup>64</sup> Menzies, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1835), 24

<sup>65</sup> Menzies, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1844), 228

bequest were not sufficient to tempt schoolmasters from other parts of Scotland to move themselves and their families to the north east.

### Attendance

It is possible also to extract 'average attendance' figures from the 1838 questionnaire expressed as a percentage of the population and to compare these with those in the Argyll report. In both cases, the figures assume that the ratio of school age children to population was consistent across the country. In both cases, also, the figures are given for all types of school taken together. In 1838 the average attendance for Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin is given as 8.9% and for the rest of Scotland of 7.9%. Given the fact that no returns were made for a significant number of schools, these cannot be taken to indicate any real difference in school attendance habit. The figures on attendance available from Argyll related the school returns to the population census of 1861. These show attendance in Aberdeenshire, Banff and 'Elginshire' as having been 14.0% of the population and the rate for the rest of the country as having been 12.5%.<sup>66</sup> Again, a significant number of schools and counties made no returns so, again, these figures must be treated with caution. In any case, they do not offer real grounds for asserting that the bequest had had an obvious beneficial effect on school attendance in the north east. Laurie gives figures for the proportion of scholars attending for 140 days in 1837, 1852 and 1862 showing them as 32.6%, 42.2% and 57.1%<sup>67</sup> and describing them as having 'improved very considerably'<sup>68</sup> and Marjorie Cruickshank argues that 'by 1874 attendance had increased by 50% (a proportion in no way accounted for by growth of population)'.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, Cruickshank does not quote her source and neither she nor Laurie attempt to relate their findings to what was happening elsewhere in Scotland. It is clear that during the intervening years there will have been changes in attitudes to education which will have influenced attendance. Indeed, by the date to which Cruickshank refers the 1872 Act had been passed, making it officially compulsory. Thus it is again impossible to determine

---

<sup>66</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland). Second Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners, Elementary Schools*, 190

<sup>67</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 347

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Cruickshank, 'The Dick Bequest', *History of Education Quarterly*, September 1965, Vol 5 No 3, 160

precisely the effect which the bequest had on this particular indicator of educational success.

### Higher Subjects

However, when consideration is given to the availability of Greek, Latin and mathematics a different picture emerges. No figures are available for the number of scholars studying these subjects in the 1838 survey but they are for the number of schools in which they were taught. These show clearly that the availability of Latin, Greek and mathematics in parochial schools in general and in parochial schools in the north-east in particular was much more widespread than it was in schools in Scotland as a whole even before the bequest began to operate. The figures, which are expressed as a percentage of those schools which responded to the questionnaire, are shown in the following table.

Table 1<sup>70</sup>

% Offering	Parochial Schools: Aberdeen, Banff, Elgin	Parochial Schools: The rest of Scotland	All other Schools in Scotland
Greek	64.7	45.5	17.7
Latin	75.2	71.3	34.2
Maths	88.7	72.2	40.3

When the Argyll Commission collected its statistics it did so on the basis of the percentage of pupils studying these subjects rather than the percentage of schools offering them. This makes direct comparison with 1838 impossible. However, the Commission did single out the north east where ‘the parochial system is most fully developed in accordance with its traditionary character’,<sup>71</sup> showing a significantly greater uptake of Latin and Greek there than in the rest of Scotland.

---

<sup>70</sup> PP1841 Vol XIX, *Extracted from Abstract of Answers by Schoolmasters in Scotland to Questionnaire 1838*

<sup>71</sup> PP 1865 Vol XVII, *Education Commission (Scotland). First Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners*, 190

Table 2<sup>72</sup>

Percentage of Pupils studying	Parochial Schools in Scotland	Non-Parochial Schools In Scotland	Aberdeen Banff Moray
Latin	4.7	2.5	6.88
Greek	0.5	0.2	1.7
Maths			4.62

\* Figures for mathematics were not given except for the north east.

In his Report of 1865 on Dick bequest schools Laurie gives actual figures for scholars studying the various subjects and, as the following table shows, these demonstrate that there was a very significant increase in pupil uptake between 1833 and 1862<sup>73</sup>.

Table 3<sup>74</sup>

	Maths	Latin	Greek
1833	279	488	81
1842	531	560	61
1852	700	803	186
1862	603	860	196
Total Increase 1833-1862	324	372	115
% Increase 1822-1862	116.1	76.2	142.0

Even allowing for inaccuracy in the statistics and for the different ways in which they were collected, these figures taken together suggest that the teaching advanced subjects was more widespread in the north east and the bequest, and Laurie, must surely have been responsible, at least in part, for this.

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 347

<sup>74</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 347



### Leaving Destinations.

In the absence of appropriate statistics it would be impossible to make valid comparisons of ‘leavers’ destinations’ between Dick bequest schools and the rest of Scotland. In any case, the increasing trend towards removing able children from rural schools to complete their advanced schooling would have rendered any attempt to collect such statistics unreliable at best. However, Laurie makes comments on this subject in his 1890 report which are interesting in themselves. In this report he says that the total number of scholars returned as preparing for the university was 574, of whom 198 were in the Dick bequest district. He claims that had the rest of Scotland shown the same proportion the total number would have been 1980 instead of 574<sup>75</sup> adding that, ‘During the twenty years ended in 1879, of the highest fifty bursars annually (ie university entrance “scholars”) an average of 20.4 had come direct to the university from parochial schools or after a very short period of preparation at a secondary school.’<sup>76</sup> Adducing this as evidence of ‘the success with which the Dick bequest trust had contended with the depressing influences of the Code’<sup>77</sup> Laurie then gives figures for the ten years ending in 1888 saying that, ‘209 boys went direct from the parish schools to the universities, and 156 went to the universities after a brief stay of from three to nine months at a secondary school – in all 365; in other words an average of thirty-six per annum from 122 schools scattered over the three counties’.<sup>78</sup> Laurie adds that he believes that this was the optimum number since, ‘A number in excess of this would, indicate that boys were not pushing themselves forward under the influence of a laudable ambition, but were being forced forward to their own ultimate loss.’<sup>79</sup>

This might be thought to contain an element of special pleading and this report does contain claims from Laurie that the success of the bequest should be now measured differently as a consequence of external factors. Among these he lists the rail link to Aberdeen and the new alternatives to the bursary competition, such as ‘the throwing open of posts in the lower

---

<sup>75</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 37

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 38

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 51

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

branches of the Civil Service, the institution of Training Colleges for those who mean to be teachers, the examinations under the Law Agents Act and of the Pharmaceutical Society'.<sup>80</sup>

In 1904, Laurie reported that, 'the number of those going direct to universities remains stationary, those passing the Pharmaceutical and Law Agents' Examination have also remained steady, while the number passing into Training Colleges has increased from 19 per annum to 38.'<sup>81</sup>

### Threats to the Dick bequest

The first major threat to the operation of the Dick bequest came with the issuing of the code of 1864. The new Clause 93.3 proposed that, 'Annual grants to endowed schools are reduced by the amount of their income from endowment.'<sup>82</sup> In the absence of the minute books for the period, the only evidence of the trust's response is a lengthy statement submitted on their behalf over the name of their Chairman, James Hope. This is reproduced in full in Laurie's report.<sup>83</sup> The principal argument advanced was simply that the Dick bequest schools were not 'endowed schools' as such.

Laurie reports that by 1865 two fifths of parochial schoolmasters had qualified for Privy Council grants. If the new clause had come in the effect of the Dick bequest would have been eliminated because if forced to choose between a Privy Council and a Dick bequest grant, teachers would have opted for the Privy Council because it would be easier to obtain, not requiring the sitting of an examination, and thus the aim of promoting scholarship would have been threatened.<sup>84</sup> In the event the code of 1864 was suspended pending the findings of the Argyll Commission and was never fully implemented. Nevertheless, the threat at the time was real and Laurie's contribution to the defence of the trust, though not specifically identifiable in their submission, will certainly have been significant.

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 42

<sup>81</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1903), 17,18

<sup>82</sup> PP 1864 Vol XLIV, *Education. Revised Code of Regulations*, 14

<sup>83</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 385-390

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 241, 242

There was, inevitably, a great deal of upheaval and reassessment of the workings of the bequest after 1872, when schooling became compulsory and when heritors were replaced by school boards but, the minute books having been lost, there is no record of this period although Laurie later recorded that, ‘The three years following the Act of 1872 were anxious years for the bequest; and I myself began to suspect its days were numbered.’<sup>85</sup>

The next major threat to the operation of the bequest came with the passing of the Educational Endowments (Scotland) Act of 1882.<sup>86</sup> This necessitated the re-writing of the Dick Trust constitution to take account of changed circumstances and Laurie records in his report to the trustees of 1891 that he personally was charged with interpreting the Act for the trustees.<sup>87</sup> The Act is complex but, essentially, those teachers who had been in post since before 1873 were to receive a continuing annual grant equal to the average of what they have received for the preceding six years, providing that they continued to deliver teaching in the higher subjects as required by the original terms of the trust without further examination. Those in post but appointed after 1873 were to receive £15pa plus a capitation allowance for each child actually receiving higher instruction, to a maximum of an extra £35pa. again without further examination. The new clause 27<sup>88</sup> was the most radical of all but Laurie makes little of it in his report. This brought to an end, for new entrants to the scheme, the system which had by then been in operation for forty seven years or so. Henceforth grants were to be paid to the school boards, rather than to the schoolmasters themselves, in order that they could provide teachers to give higher instruction. The boards were also to provide enough other staff to give the graduate time to do this and were not to use the money to reduce expenditure elsewhere. Crucially, the boards in receipt of bequest monies were to provide a teacher who, ‘shall either be a university graduate, or shall have, before the date of this Scheme, passed the examination conducted by the Examiners of the

---

<sup>85</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 33

<sup>86</sup> PP1890 Vol LVI, *Endowments (Scotland) Act 1882, copy of scheme of management of the Dick Bequest*

<sup>87</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest 1891*, (Minute Book), GD1/4/192, NAS

<sup>88</sup> PP1890 Vol LVI, *Endowments (Scotland) Act 1882, copy of scheme of management of the Dick Bequest*, 4

present trustees of the Dick bequest.’<sup>89</sup> This abolished examinations for Dick bequest teachers, although provision remained for inspection by the visitor.

Laurie, along with four of the trustees of the bequest, gave evidence to the Balfour Commission which had been set up to examine all the individual endowments in Scotland.<sup>90</sup> In their evidence they explained the work of the bequest in considerable detail and again defended its independence on the grounds that they were making grants to individual schoolmasters and that, therefore, were not dealing with endowed schools. In this they were successful to the extent that the Dick bequest was left to operate independently, although Balfour did provide in its case and that of several other smaller bequests, such as the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, for ‘the election of representatives by the Chairmen of the School Boards’ in the relevant districts.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, Laurie reacted strongly, on behalf of the trust, against the new code of 1903. His concerns were fully set out in a letter which he sent to the chairman of the Dick bequest trustees on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1903. He also included letters sent to Sir Henry Craik seeking information together with Craik’s replies.<sup>92</sup> The problem was that pupils were to be required to study one of the new ‘supplementary courses’ in order to qualify for a merit certificate. These were the commercial course, industrial course, rural school course, and the household management course. The idea was to introduce relevance to what the pupils would be likely to be doing in their adult life into the curriculum. Laurie’s concern was that this would leave no time for the ‘university’ subjects and that the bequest would become ‘practically inoperative’. Craik replied by enclosing a copy of a memorandum relating to the code which indicated that advanced departments must be ‘brought into reasonable conformity with one or other of the Supplementary Courses’ and that, ‘the Education Department is the sole judge of this.’ This was evidently cold comfort to Laurie who gave it as his opinion that:

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> PP 1886 Vol XXVIII, *Third Report of the Educational Endowments (Scotland) Commission*, 324-342

<sup>91</sup> PP 1890 Vol XXXI, *Seventh Report of the Educational Endowments (Scotland) Commission*, xvi

<sup>92</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1904), 25-30

On the whole it seems to me that if the general policy of the Code is carried out in the spirit of its framers, (a) the higher instruction in rural schools in Scotland is at an end and the school time will be occupied with work which anticipates the industrial occupations of life (b) the bridge over which for generations many a poor country boy has passed will be broken down (c) a cast iron system will be imposed on every school (d) that the imposition of subjects and time-tables will be closely followed by interference with methods, and only an inferior class of man will then enter the profession (e) the education of Scotland will be generally depressed.<sup>93</sup>

In the event the 1904 code was unchanged from that of 1903 (see ch XI).

### Conclusion

When Laurie retired in 1907 he had been visitor for fifty-one years. During that time he had seen many changes in response to the changing circumstances of education in Scotland. It is clear that, as far as possible, Laurie continued the work which Menzies had started, and did so on the same principles and in essentially the same style. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the effects of the bequest in the three counties. Clearly, this was an area which was in any case pre-disposed to higher education in its parochial schools, and clearly, the bursary competition and the university had a powerful effect in stimulating and supporting this attitude. Equally clearly, the bequest ensured that a significant number of schoolmasters earned more, and had a higher status than they would otherwise have done. As Laurie puts it, 'I think it will be also admitted that the mere fact that the schools they hold are known as "Dick Bequest" schools, has operated to make the position and status of the parochial schoolmasters more attractive in the north east than elsewhere. It has been a br  vet of rank.'<sup>94</sup> Laurie does, however, acknowledge that, 'Had there been no university easily accessible, the Dick Bequest would have accomplished little.'<sup>95</sup>

Those educational historians who mention Laurie and the Dick bequest tend to credit it with having been genuinely influential, though none of them back up their comments with appropriate statistics. For example, 'One of the direct results was that, with few exceptions, all the parochial schoolmasters in the three north-eastern counties were graduates in Arts, a

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 29 - 31

<sup>94</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890), 80

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

condition of affairs which existed in no other part of Scotland. The literary character of the schools themselves had risen considerably.’<sup>96</sup>

The Dick bequest survived the 1872 upheaval, ‘unscathed through the danger to higher education from the much larger government grants earnable by elementary subjects, and that the judicious action of the Trustees under the eminently skilful guidance of Professor Laurie, ... , has given a singularly healthy impulse to all the schools.’<sup>97</sup> ‘As Visitor to the Dick bequest he has exerted a most beneficial influence on education in the three counties.’<sup>98</sup> The only dissenting voice was that of Lord Balfour of Burleigh, who stated in his evidence to the Parker Committee that:

The average difference – the average superiority of salary in the Dick bequest schools was only 13L. We went into this very carefully ... Before 1872 the schoolmaster was practically the governing body of his own school and could devote as much time as he pleased to higher education. Much of the higher teaching in a Parochial school came from the pride which a good teacher took in his better pupils, the effort which he made to keep them on at school and the unlimited time he could bestow on them. Now the matter is in the hands of the School Boards who have to look to government grant; and in most cases, higher education does not pay so well as efficient standard work, or the lower stages of specific subjects. The result is that although the Dick bequest secures an efficient teacher, it does not by any means follow that he gives higher instruction. ... So far as the result can be shown in figures it is this: the average entries in the Dick bequest schools (not individuals) in the subjects of Latin, Greek, Mathematics, French and German is 28 and there are no less than 55 of the schools in which the number of such entries is 20 and under, going as low as 5. ... From that I say the present administration of the DB, frittered away over too many schools is nil.<sup>99</sup>

On the evidence, this is a harsh judgement but, equally, the claims made by Kerr, in particular, would seem to be exaggerated.

It cannot be doubted that Laurie was entirely in sympathy with Dick’s original aims and that he worked tirelessly and efficiently over fifty years to promote them. He was ‘the right man in the right place at the right time’ but, in this context, he was an administrator rather than a visionary.

---

<sup>96</sup> J. Strong, *History of Secondary Education in Scotland*, (Oxford, 1909), 202

<sup>97</sup> J. Kerr, *Scottish education: school and university, from early times to 1908*, (Cambridge, 1910), 284

<sup>98</sup> A. Morgan, *Makers of Scottish Education*, (London, 1929), 195

<sup>99</sup> PP 1888 Vol XLI, *Committee to inquire into Questions relating to Education in Scotland Third Report, Minutes of Evidence*, 39

### Chapter VIII – Endowment Reform pre-1872

Prior to the introduction of systematic state funding for education, much of the money on which it depended came by way of endowments. These consisted of legacies, large and small, which the testators had desired be used to further one or more aspects of education. This had resulted in a diversity of provision and by the time the Newcastle Commission came to report on education in England in 1861 there was a feeling that much of the money was being inefficiently used. The Commission recommended central control suggesting that, ‘steps be taken to turn the educational charities to better account, and to apply to the purpose of education some of the other charities which are not at present applicable to that purpose’.<sup>1</sup> and proposed that the Education and Charities Committees be combined and the Privy Council be given power to make ordinances designed to improve charities ‘which are mischievous or useless as at present applied’.<sup>2</sup> The only one of Newcastle’s recommendations which the then Education Minister, Robert Lowe, accepted and sought to introduce was payment by results but a marker had been laid down. The Newcastle Commission was quickly followed, in England, by the Clarendon Commission, which looked specifically at the nine most prestigious and influential schools in the country. It, too, recommended that, ‘The Governing Bodies of the several Colleges and Schools should be reformed’ and that, ‘The subsisting statutes and laws of the several colleges and schools ... should be carefully revised under some competent authority.’<sup>3</sup> Newcastle having looked at the provision of ‘popular’ education and Clarendon at the most influential schools it was inevitable that a third royal commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Taunton, should be established to ‘inquire into the Education given in schools not comprised within Her Majesty’s two former Commissions.’<sup>4</sup> This commission reported in 1868 and went even

---

<sup>1</sup> PP 1861 Vol XXI, *Royal Commission to inquire into the State of popular Education in England Report*, 547

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 548

<sup>3</sup> PP1864 Vol XX, *Royal Commission to inquire into the Revenues and Management of Certain Colleges and Schools*, 52

<sup>4</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXVIII, *Royal Commission to inquire into Education in Schools in England and Wales*, iii

further than Newcastle in advocating central control of endowments. Their view was that what was needed was, 'to free the Commission entirely from that view of school endowments which the law of charities imposes alike on the Court of Chancery and the Charity Commission.' And to entrust the power to '*alter the trusts of charities*' 'not to the Court of Chancery but to an administrative Board or Committee.'<sup>5</sup>

This scrutiny of education and of the uses to which endowments were being put, in England, was matched by comparable moves in Scotland. There was a bill laid before Parliament in 1862 'to make further provision for the education of the people of Scotland', presented by the Lord Advocate, Clause 38 of which read, 'The Commissioners shall have power to revise all Foundations, Mortifications, Endowments, or bequests for Educational Purposes, which have taken effect for more than Fifty Years.'<sup>6</sup> In addition, a Royal Commission, under the Chairmanship of the Duke of Argyll, was established in 1864 to examine education in Scotland. It was effectively asked to cover all the ground dealt with in England by Newcastle, Clarendon and Taunton. They were specifically tasked with inquiring into:

Schools in Scotland, and, in particular. (1<sup>st</sup>) parochial Schools; (2<sup>nd</sup>) Burgh Schools; (3<sup>rd</sup>) Schools receiving funds voted by Parliament; (4<sup>th</sup>) Middle Class schools and others not being Adventure Schools and not receiving Grants from funds voted by Parliament; (5<sup>th</sup>) Normal and Training Schools; (6<sup>th</sup>) Adventure Schools, in so far as you, our said Commissioners, may consider material.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the Argyll Commission looked at the endowed hospitals only as part of a much larger inquiry. However, they did remark that:

Having thus briefly noted the five points included under Finance, namely Endowments, Annual Grants, Bursaries, Fees and Cost of Education, and Emoluments of Masters, we would call particular attention to the poverty of the schools to which we have referred more than once in the foregoing pages. Their most noticeable feature is the want of permanent endowments and the consequent dependence of the masters almost entirely on fees.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 469-470

<sup>6</sup> PP 1862 Vol II, *Education (Scotland) A bill to make further provision of the people of Scotland*, 13

<sup>7</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland. Second Report*, a2

<sup>8</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Education Commission (Scotland). Third Report*, 71



Significantly, it was also argued that:

There is yet another source from which aid might be obtained ... namely Hospital funds and endowments. Could any considerable portion of these be made available for the encouragement of higher or secondary education, the question of funds would be very much simplified, and the demands either on local rates or the public purse would be greatly reduced.

and further that:

There is no doubt, however, that the Hospital revenues and 'mortifications' throughout Scotland are of enormous value. Some of them, as at present administered are of little use, and the number of persons whom, they benefit, when compared to their pecuniary value, is ridiculously small.<sup>9</sup>

This, in brief, is the context within which Laurie made his contribution to a period of rapid and extraordinary change in the way in which educational endowments were applied in Scotland. His own involvement with endowments began with his appointment as visitor to the Dick bequest trust in 1855, which almost certainly led directly to his becoming involved in the reform of the hospital schools. Before considering Laurie's influence in this context it is necessary to set out, briefly, some of the history of endowments and endowed institutions in Scotland prior to the 1860s.

#### Endowed Institutions in Scotland

George Heriot, shopkeeper, trader, goldsmith and money lender, died in 1624 and left the residue of his estate, amounting to £26,625 10s 3.5d, for the founding of an 'Hospital' 'to be employed for the maintenance, relief, bringing up, and educating, as far as means will allow, of so many poor fatherless boys, freemen's sons of the town of Edinburgh.'<sup>10</sup> Heriot was inspired by the example of Christ's Hospital, which was then in London, founded in 1552. He in turn inspired his successors in Scotland.

There were numerous subsequent bequests for educational purposes, large and small, but it is not necessary to enumerate them all for the purpose of this research. Suffice it to say that

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 73

<sup>10</sup> W. Steven, *History of George Heriot's Hospital*, (Edinburgh, 1872), 45

by 1864, the hospitals controlled by far the greatest amount of money and educated by far the greatest number of those pupils who were benefiting from endowments and the Argyll Commission therefore focussed principally on these and on those in Edinburgh in particular. In their report of 1867-68 the commissioners record that, 'We have obtained returns from the authorities of eleven Hospitals in Scotland. With the exception of Gordon's at Aberdeen and Hutcheson's at Glasgow, these are all in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. Excluding Hutcheson's and the sum devoted to the day-schools attached to Heriot's and James Gillespie's, the net annual revenue now amounts to about £44,182.'<sup>11</sup> This compares with the grant for schools in Scotland from the Privy Council for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1868 of £77,816 14s 2d.<sup>12</sup> It was therefore a very considerable sum of money in the context.

In terms of Laurie's involvement in the evolution of the use of endowments in Scotland, the focus should be on George Heriot's Hospital and on the three institutions under the control of the Edinburgh Merchant Company. These were George Watson's Hospital, founded in 1741, Daniel Stewart's Hospital, 1855, and the Merchant Maiden Hospital, 1695. This is because the Edinburgh Merchant Company and George Heriot's Trust dominated the issue of educational endowments both in terms of the finances at their disposal and of the number of pupils in their hospitals and because each of these two bodies commissioned Laurie to inspect their hospitals and to report on them.

### George Heriot's Trust

Heriot decreed in his will that the Lord Provost, Baillies, Ministers, and Town Councillors of Edinburgh were to be declared Perpetual Governors. Under their guidance over a period of just over two hundred years the trust prospered, as did the Hospital. By 1835, they had an operating surplus of £3,000. Instead of increasing the numbers in the hospital the trustees decided, not without discussion and dissent, to use the surplus to create 'Foundation Schools'. These were to be free schools educating day scholars. This was a major departure. Not only did it fly in the face of orthodox opinion on the remission of fees

---

<sup>11</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland. Third Report*, xix

<sup>12</sup> PP 1868-69 Vol XX, *Report of the Committee on Education*, lxxxvi

but it required parliamentary approval, which was obtained in 1836. By the time of the Argyll Commission the Heriot's Hospital day schools were educating 3055 boys.<sup>13</sup>

### The Merchant Company

Although George Watson was not himself a member of the Merchant Company, when he died leaving about £12,000 to endow a hospital, he specifically willed that it should be under the governance of the Merchant Company. This was because he had been impressed by the way in which they managed the Merchant Maiden Hospital, founded in 1695 as a result of the generosity of a number of contributors, of whom Watson himself was one. Daniel Stewart, who died in 1814, followed Watson's example and endowed Stewart's Hospital, also entrusting its management to the Merchant Company, although the hospital did not open its doors to the first fifty boys until 1855.

Like the Heriot's trustees, the Merchant Company managed their funds skilfully over the years so that they too had surpluses in their educational budgets and they too sought to modernise in the middle years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. As early as 1830, a proposal was put to the governors that they should establish a committee with a view to paving the way for the introduction of day boys. This committee was not established until 1846 and two years later they resolved to apply to parliament for permission to admit day boys. This was granted in 1852. By the early 1860s public funding for education was still in its comparative infancy. The first parliamentary grants for schools in Scotland were distributed in 1834 but these were for buildings only and were for elementary schools. This initial system was subsequently augmented, mainly through the pupil-teacher scheme. However, there was a growing awareness of the importance of education for all classes of society – hence the establishment of the royal commissions. In these circumstances it is not surprising that attention turned to the considerable sums of money potentially available from endowments. There were, however, two additional factors which served to complicate the issue. Quite apart from the fact that it was believed that educational endowments in Scotland were not being used to best effect, there was a growing feeling that the hospital

---

<sup>13</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland. Third Report*, xx

system itself was intrinsically flawed and that it ought to be reformed on both philosophical and pragmatic educational grounds. This is of considerable significance with respect to the question of whether Laurie was an original thinker on the subject of Hospital reform or whether, as will be argued, he was building on ideas which were already gaining currency. The second significant factor concerns the state of the Merchant Company itself. Unfortunately many of the relevant statistics are not now available, but there is no doubt that the influence of the Company had declined during the first part of the nineteenth century. There were several factors at work here: the requirement to pay an entrance fee to join the Company, increased industrialisation and changing trading patterns which meant that belonging no longer conferred the same commercial benefits, and a consequently reduced level of political influence deriving from decreased numbers which in turn damaged recruitment.

By 1866, therefore, circumstances had conspired to put reform at or near the top of the agenda for both the Heriot's Trust and the Merchant Company. In 1868 Laurie was invited by both the Merchant Company and the trustees of George Heriot's Hospital to inspect and report on their hospital schools. He was, by then, an experienced inspector of schools through his work as visitor to the Dick bequest. He had also been secretary to the Church of Scotland education committee for some thirteen years and would consequently have been well known in Edinburgh.

#### George Heriot's Hospital

The invitation from the governors to inspect Heriot's came before that from the Merchant Company to inspect their hospitals and is recorded in the minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> May 1868. However, those same minutes record that, 'The House Governor mentioned some time ago (17<sup>th</sup> November 1865 and 26<sup>th</sup> January 1866) that it was agreed that Mr Gordon, HM Inspector of Schools, and Mr Simon Laurie, Inspector of the Dick Bequest Schools, should be asked to examine the classes in the Hospital but that these gentlemen had found that other engagements at the time prevented their doing so.'<sup>14</sup> The minutes record that:

---

<sup>14</sup> Heriot's Hospital Minute Book 7<sup>th</sup> May 1868, GD421/4, NAS

The Governors might now request Mr Laurie to examine the classes. The Committee (Education Committee) highly approved of this suggestion and recommended its adoption by the Governors. The examination should be ... a through examination of all departments. Mr Laurie should be asked to make a report to the Governors. If the suggestion is approved of and found to work well the Committee recommend that the examination should be made annually. Signed Thomas Tawse C.<sup>15</sup>

The stated intention to consider instituting annual inspections suggests that the governors were trying to improve the education provided in the hospital, rather than attempting to elicit support for a radical overhaul of the system itself. This is not to say that the governors were not open to the possibility of reform. They were sufficiently radical in their management of the funds to establish the foundation schools in 1836, and, as early as 1844, William Johnston, then a governor, insisted that an inquiry into the 'monastic system' be established and Dr Robert Lee, also a governor, preached a sermon on Commemoration Day in 1846 in which he too questioned the system itself. This sermon was printed and distributed, thus raising the issue even more publicly. Dr Frederick Bedford, the house-governor, that is headmaster, also raised the issue of the defects in the hospital system with his governors and, publicly, in an address to the Society for the Promotion of Social Sciences in Edinburgh in 1863. Of particular interest, in the context of hospital reform, is the report commissioned by the governors of Heriot's Hospital from their own medical advisors. A visit to the hospital was made by the medical officer of health for the city Dr Littlejohn and the medical officers of health for the institution – Drs Christison and Wood. They visited in the autumn of 1867 and reported to the Governors on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1868.<sup>16</sup> In their report they noted that the mortality rate was much improved and they expressed general satisfaction with conditions. However, they recommended that the boys should have more space in the dormitories.

This was a report primarily from the point of view of the health of those resident in the hospital and it focussed on the problems caused by lack of space. It did not therefore impinge on the issues on which Laurie was later asked to report. Nor did it address the wider social issues arising from the monastic system itself. It is, however, important for two reasons. Firstly, it showed the keen interest which the joint committee responsible for the management of the hospital took in ensuring high standards. Secondly, it is interesting

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> F. W. Bedford, *History of George Heriot's Hospital*, (Edinburgh, 1872), 187

because of the reaction which it brought out of the sub-committee. Bedford records that the sub-committee decided to take opinion of counsel on whether the doctors' reports gave them grounds for reducing the number of residents and making the number up with an equal number of day boys. They also resolved to discover whether, in the event of this being permissible, the day boys would have to be subject to all the same conditions, particularly with respect to attendance at chapel.<sup>17</sup> This is important because it moved the debate well beyond the issues raised directly by the doctors and because the committee's suggestions for hospital improvement preceded Laurie's involvement with either Heriot's or the Merchant Company and foreshadowed some of Laurie's later recommendations. This supports the contention that Laurie's ideas were neither remarkable nor original when he came to express them in his report to the Merchant Company.

#### Report to the Merchant Company

Laurie received his commission to inspect and report on the hospitals under the care and management of the Merchant Company in April 1868 and he reported in July of that year. The hospitals involved were Daniel Stewart's, George Watson's, The Merchant Maiden and James Gillespie's Free School. It is only possible to speculate as to why Laurie in particular was chosen for this purpose but he was in many ways an obvious choice. He was an experienced inspector of schools; he had already been invited to inspect Heriot's Hospital; he would have commanded respect by virtue of his connection with the Dick bequest and the Church of Scotland; he was resident in Edinburgh and therefore on hand to carry out the inspections; and he would have been personally well known to many of the members of the several hospital education committees. It would also be possible for the Merchant Company to argue later that Laurie was an impartial commentator, since he had no formal connection with the Company and did not, in any of his professional capacities, report to the Privy Council. In this respect he differed from other possible inspectors, such as Gordon or Fearon, who were part of her Majesty's Inspectorate. In addition to all of this, Laurie had already given his evidence to the Argyll Commission. In this he said that:

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 191

I can imagine no means of maintenance within reach except municipal funds and the fees of pupils, apart from special endowments; although it will one day probably be a question to what extent the large funds ‘mortified’ for ‘hospital’ purposes may be turned to the general use without detriment to the interests of the persons whom the founders specially intended to benefit.<sup>18</sup>

This suggests that he was open to the idea of significant reform and this is likely to have been attractive to the Merchant Company.

In a recent history of George Watson’s College,<sup>19</sup> Les Howie suggests that a small group within the Merchant Company comprising Thomas Boyd, James Duncan, Thomas Knox, Thomas Strong and Alexander Kirk Mackie took it upon themselves to try to modernise the Company and that an ‘attractive option would be to open the Hospitals as schools for the middle class with moderate fees.’<sup>20</sup> In the absence of letters or minutes, it is impossible to be certain about what conversations may have taken place. The relevant minutes of the Merchant Company do not now exist, but the then secretary of the Merchant Company, Alexander Heron, in a history of the Merchant Company, written in 1903 when the minutes were available, says that:

The first reference to the subject of reform in the minutes is dated 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1869, when Thomas Boyd was Master. The Master, assistants, and treasurer then agreed to sign any memorial necessary in support of a Bill about to be introduced by the Lord Advocate (Moncreiff) to give the governors of endowed hospitals greater powers in the way of extending the usefulness of hospitals.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, Laurie himself had been commissioned a year previously to report on the hospitals under Merchant Company management and Heron goes on to say that reform had been ‘previously more or less discussed.’<sup>22</sup>

It may be that the explanation for this apparent discrepancy is simply that many of the discussions about reform and about the need to modernise took place within the hospitals themselves and not in the formal structure of Company meetings. However it came about, it

---

<sup>18</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland. Third Report*, 204

<sup>19</sup> L. Howie, *George Watson’s College, An Illustrated History*, (Edinburgh, 2006)

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 38

<sup>21</sup> A. Heron, *The Merchant Company – Its Rise and Progress*, (Edinburgh 1903), 283

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 282-284

is indisputable that, armed with Laurie's report, the Merchant Company reformed the hospitals in its care with astonishing thoroughness and speed in the final years of the 1860s.

#### Laurie's Recommendations.

In the context of endowment reform, it is not the main body of Laurie's reports which is of particular interest. He chose, when presenting these, to add a section at the end entitled 'General Remarks on Hospital Training'. It is these 'remarks' which contain all his recommendations on the system itself, rather than on individual hospitals. Laurie recommended that George Watson's Hospital should be reformed in a number of liberalising ways. However, he added that:

There is only one way of removing them (the evils of Hospital training), and of giving full effect to the benevolent intentions of the founders of these institutions: and *this is by converting the Houses into Boarding Establishments, and sending the boys out for their instruction to the High School, or some similar establishment.*<sup>23</sup>

The education committee reported to the governors of George Watson's Hospital on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1868. By September of that year the senior boys were indeed being sent for their tuition to the High School and the hospital was on its way to becoming simply a boarding establishment.

Howie suggests that Laurie's general remarks were unsolicited and records that, 'Laurie, however, then produced his bombshell, a separate report entitled "General Remarks on Hospital Training" which utterly condemned the monastic system.'<sup>24</sup> Alexander Morgan, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, has been Laurie's keenest advocate. He became rector of the Church of Scotland Training College in 1903 and was subsequently the principal of the United Training Colleges. He will therefore have been very familiar with the Edinburgh scene. However, he will also have known Laurie well personally and it is possible that his assessments of Laurie's contribution are over-generous. Be that as it may, Morgan asserted that, 'Laurie was one of the first to draw attention to the need to

---

<sup>23</sup> Laurie, *Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 127

<sup>24</sup> Howie, *George Watson's College, An Illustrated History*, (Edinburgh, 2006), 36



reform endowments to avoid waste and overlap and to the need to reform the Hospital system of educating young children in institutions apart from their homes.’<sup>25</sup> He also writes that, ‘In later years it was the opinion of competent authorities that the great extensions which took place in secondary education in Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland were mainly due to the influence of various reports drawn up by Laurie.’<sup>26</sup> This is a reference first of all to the reports he wrote for the Merchant Company and then to the reports of the Colebrooke Commission, to which Laurie was secretary. It seems likely, on the evidence, that both Morgan and Howie overestimate the extent to which Laurie was an originator of the undoubted upheaval which took place in Scottish, and particularly in hospital, education in the decade or so following the final Argyll Commission report. That Laurie’s comments on hospital training were no surprise to the Merchant Company education committee is suggested on several fronts. There is Laurie’s own comment in his report that:

The Governors of the various Hospitals under their administration, require me to report not merely on the instruction and discipline of the Hospitals, but also, as I understand, on the larger question of a Hospital system of education with a view to the exercising of their powers for the abolition or modification of such practices as seem to interfere with the ends which they earnestly desire to attain.<sup>27</sup>

This suggests that Laurie was specifically invited to be critical of the system itself. The phrase ‘with a view to the exercising of their powers for the abolition or modification of such practices’ further suggests that at least some members of the Merchant Company had already thought through possible strategies for reforming their hospitals and strengthening their position. It could even be read as supporting the idea that the directions in which he might recommend reform may have been suggested to him in advance. Perhaps this is to read more into what Laurie says than is actually there but the remarkable speed with which the Merchant Company adopted Laurie’s more radical proposals does support this view.

Laurie’s Report was dated 6<sup>th</sup> June 1868. The education committee for Watson’s then reported to the Governors stating that:

---

<sup>25</sup> Morgan, *Makers of Scottish Education*, (London, 1929), 197

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 198

<sup>27</sup> Laurie, *Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 127

Your Committee having given their most anxious consideration and attention to the three Reports submitted by Mr Laurie, and to his General Remarks on hospital Training, cordially concur with him in thinking that the Governors should take measures towards breaking up the monastic character of such institutions as George Watson's Hospital.

They further demonstrate that they are fully aware of the report of the education commissioners, recording that, 'it is clear that the Government will immediately direct their attention to the large revenue which is at the command of the various charitable institutions in Edinburgh.'

They then 'unanimously recommend':

1. That Mr Laurie's Report, on its general principle, shall be approved by the Governors.
2. That all the boys, including Day Scholars, excepting the Lower Sections ...., shall regularly attend the High School, of which proposal the Rector and Masters of the High School have already indicated their approval.

The education committee had clearly done their homework. They go on to deal with the question of the legality of the proposed changes. They record that they have consulted the clerk to the Company who explained that when he carried through the Act of Parliament for the admission of day scholars in 1852, he obtained powers for the governors building new schoolrooms 'adjacent to the Hospital', so that, 'if the boys can be taught in such schoolrooms as are afforded by the High School .... Their proposal would be no infringement of the spirit of that Act of Parliament.'<sup>28</sup> This is debatable since the High School schoolrooms were some two miles from the hospital itself but the governors were apparently satisfied with this advice and, in the event, the decision to regard the High School as 'adjacent' was accepted.

If Laurie's recommendations had truly come as a 'bombshell' this would have meant that counsel's opinion on the legality of the proposed changes had been sought, the rector and others connected with the High School would have been consulted, the education committee would have agreed their response to Laurie's reports and would have submitted this formally to the Merchant Company itself, the full board would have considered the sub-committee's submission and would have resolved to act on it, all within a period of

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 69 - 74

four weeks. This is simply not credible. Quite apart from the practicalities of finding time for the necessary meetings and associated paperwork, bodies such as the Merchant Company do not adopt radical proposals which come as a surprise as rapidly as that. Time is invariably needed for negotiation and argument and for new ideas to become acceptable.

All of this again suggests strongly that the recommendations contained in Laurie's report were expected and that the members of the Merchant Company had been in some sense prepared for its contents and had also had their minds turned towards its consequences. This view is further supported by a letter written by Thomas Strong, the secretary to the Merchant Company and dated 18<sup>th</sup> August 1868 to James Duncan, one of the so-called 'progressives', which Heron includes in his History. This letter does not now appear to exist but it is worth reproducing in full Heron's quotation of it:

I send herewith a copy of the English Public Schools Act, which Mr Grant Duff MP recommend us to look at. You will notice that it proceeds on the recommendation of the Royal Commissioners in England, and if we had sat *still tamely* and allowed a similar Bill to be prepared during the recess, carrying out the recommendations of the Scotch Commissioners, I think the Governors of our Hospitals might have found themselves in a very awkward position. The more I reflect on the broad question, the more I am convinced that we have acted wisely in initiating these reforms voluntarily, and whatever others may think, I know that I was only doing my duty in turning the tide of thought amongst influential parties in London before Parliament broke up. I believe none are more pleased with what you are doing than some of the Royal Commissioners themselves, and both Mr Harvey and Mr Sellar, the Assistant Commissioners, - the latter of whom distinctly recommended the appropriation of our funds to the general purposes of Education throughout Scotland.<sup>29</sup>

Here is clear evidence that some at least of the members of the Merchant Company had acted in anticipation of Laurie's report. Strong has evidently been lobbying members of parliament over a period of time.

In summary, Laurie's reports and 'General Remarks' were likely to have been at least a useful statement of views which suited the Merchant Company's aims and could be used as a lever for achieving them. At most, though this could not be proved at this distance in time, Laurie may have been used deliberately to provide legitimacy for action which Boyd and his supporters always intended to take; he may even have been given a clear indication in advance of the conclusions which the Merchant Company hoped he would reach.

---

<sup>29</sup> Heron, *The Merchant Company – Its Rise and Progress*, (Edinburgh, 1903), 288

### General Remarks on Hospital Training

The most radical suggestion in the 'General Remarks', specifically with reference to George Watson's Hospital, was the recommendation that the boys should be sent to the High School for tuition and that the hospital should become a boarding establishment only and it was on these recommendations that the Merchant Company acted so swiftly. However, Laurie made other suggestions and no assessment of his originality or of his influence, could be made without considering these in the light of what others before him had said or written on the subject. First, it can be stated quite categorically that, contrary to Morgan's assertion, Laurie was not one of the first to draw attention to the need to reform hospital training. In October 1844 Councillor William Johnston, a governor of Heriot's Hospital, submitted several proposals to the other governors. These were thought to be of sufficient merit to warrant consideration by a sub-committee and this led to a 'Report of Special Committee on Resolutions by Councillor (now Sir) William Johnston' dated April 9 1845.

This sub-Committee recommended, among other things:

1. That every boy be furnished with a separate bed.
2. That in the wards and elsewhere a strict supervision be exercised over the boys.

As these arrangements would require greater space than the present, the Committee recommend that those boys who cannot be accommodated within the Institution be boarded with their parents, or such other persons as the Governors may select; that they receive from the Hospital the same education as at present enjoyed by the inmates.

Dr. Bedford, in a letter to Councillor Stott dated 11<sup>th</sup> November 1867 says that:

It appears from the Minutes of the Governors that the first and second of these resolutions were adopted by the Board but the third resolution was lost, - 16 voting for its adoption and 18 for an amendment. I am humbly of the opinion that the adoption at the present time of three similar resolutions would enable the Governors to make such alterations as are generally thought desirable.

The 1844 sub-committee's recommendations and Bedford's letter were both recorded in the Heriot's minute book in 1868, when the letter came up for consideration.<sup>30</sup>

It might be argued that Johnston's suggestions fall short of outright criticism of the system itself. However, he would have been unlikely to recommend 'strict supervision' of the boys unless he, at least, felt that there was a lack of adequate supervision at the time with, presumably, consequent undesirable social consequences. To recommend in the next sentence that day scholars be introduced points to the probability that Johnston thought that changes to the system itself were desirable, rather than simply, for example, a change of house governor. Johnston's report was followed a year later by a more outspoken and direct attack on the hospital system itself. Dr Robert Lee, Minister of Old Greyfriars Kirk and a Governor of Heriot's Hospital, used the occasion of the Annual Celebration of the Anniversary of George Heriot's birthday to deliver a sermon to a congregation of governors, parents, boys and masters on the subject. His most striking comment was that 'the more we look into it the more shall we be convinced that the system is radically vicious, and productive of deleterious influences, both intellectual and moral, on the minds of them who are subjected to this training. Nor is the injury confined to the children. Probably the parents suffer no less from it.'<sup>31</sup>

A year later, Thomas Guthrie published *A Plea for Ragged Schools*, in which he wrote, referring to the hospitals, 'the management is not bad; but in some elements the system itself is vicious.'<sup>32</sup> He also records having given the following advice to a friend who was contemplating sending his son to a hospital school, but who could afford to support him at home and to pay the full rate for his education, 'Then my friend, were I you, it should not be till they had laid me in my coffin that a boy of mine should lose the blessings of a father's fireside, and be cast amid the dangers of a public hospital.'<sup>33</sup> Guthrie himself was well known and his pamphlet received a wide enough circulation for Lyon Playfair to be

---

<sup>30</sup> Heriot's Hospital Minute Book, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1868, GD421/4, NAS

<sup>31</sup> R. Lee, *Sermon preached before the Governors of George Heriot's Hospital and others on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 1846 being the Commemoration Day of George Heriot's Birthday*, (Edinburgh, 1847), 6

<sup>32</sup> T. Guthrie, *A Plea for ragged Schools or Prevention is better than Cure*, (Edinburgh, 1847), 6

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

able to recall and quote from it in Parliament in 1869.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, as a rider to his quotation from Guthrie, he says, ‘These unfavourable views were but an echo of the Scotch feeling with regard to these institutions – they were the opinions of Dr Bedford, the headmaster of Heriot’s Hospital, of Mr Lawrie (sic), the well known educationalist, of Mr Fearon, one of the Commissioners.’<sup>35</sup>

From all of this, it is quite clear that Laurie’s views on the monastic system as expressed in 1868 were far from being original, though he did align himself with those who advocated quite radical change. This does not make his report to the Merchant Company unimportant, nor does it invalidate his recommendations. It does, however, increase the probability that the Merchant Company knew very well in advance what Laurie would be likely to say and that they commissioned his report with a view to being able to use it later as an additional ‘lever’ when it came to trying to bring about the changes they wanted. Once again, it would seem that Laurie’s talent was for the organisation and presentation of ideas which were current rather than for original thought.

#### Recommendations to the Merchant Company

Laurie made thirteen separate recommendations and those most relevant to the argument are reproduced here. These included: permitting the boys to go beyond the gates during play hours; connecting the parents with the institution, and the children with the parents by converting the hospitals into weekly boarding establishments; giving a total of eleven weeks’ holiday spread through the year in order to ensure that boys maintained their family associations; creating occasional social interaction between the boys and governors and staff; trusting the boys more; and, most importantly of all, throwing open the day classes to a limited number of day boys and girls on the payment of a moderate fee. There are two main themes which run through of these recommendations. They are all designed either to strengthen family ties and parental involvement with the institutions or to ‘civilise’ them by treating the pupils more as individuals by increasing their freedom of movement and activity. These two themes are underpinned by Laurie’s assertion that hospitals ‘inevitably

---

<sup>34</sup> Hansard Vol 197, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1869,152

<sup>35</sup> Hansard Vol 197, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1869,152

tend to destruction of individuality'<sup>36</sup> and depend on his view that morality is best learned through the love and example which are only to be found in families. 'The most powerful of all the binding moral forces which operates while a boy's principles and habits are being formed, are the obligations of the affections. Family life ... He knows nothing of it.' Consequently, for hospital children, 'morality is either a habit or a hard duty'.<sup>37</sup>

There would not seem to be anything particularly surprising or new in Laurie's observations and recommendations. Almost all of them were presaged in one form or another by either Lee or Bedford. Lee's 1846 sermon did not pass without comment. It was criticised, in particular, in a pamphlet published shortly afterwards written anonymously by 'An Auld Callant'<sup>38</sup> (the recognised description of a former inmate of Heriot's Hospital). He accused Lee of attacking the very idea of Heriot's benevolent bequest and of distortion of the facts. The criticisms were not in themselves of great significance but they led Lee to add an explanatory preface to his sermon when he came to publish it in printed form. This preface contains a fuller explanation of Lee's views and suggestions. He states that, 'It may be sufficient for me to disclaim any intention to lower the fame of George Heriot or to damage the character of his Hospital; my purpose in the following sermon has simply been to recommend family life.'<sup>39</sup> This was also one of Laurie's main objectives. Lee goes on to suggest that those of the boys who could do so should become day scholars. 'But surely no evil could arise, from permitting those of their boys who have parents – and very many of them have – who are sober, industrious, well-conditioned people, to go home every evening and lodge with their parents.' Although when Laurie suggests day scholars he seems to be proposing that a quota of day boys should be added to the boarding complement rather than suggesting that some of the current pupils should convert from boarding to day the suggestion is essentially the same. Lee argues that among the advantages which this would

---

<sup>36</sup> Laurie, *Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 118

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 119, 118

<sup>38</sup> An Auld Callant, *Heriotes no Monk or Strictures on the Sermon Delivered to Parents, Children and Governors on the Late Anniversary of George Heriot's Birthday by Rev Dr. R. Lee, one of the Governors, and on his proposed alterations on the constitution of the Hospital*, (Edinburgh, 1846)

<sup>39</sup> Lee, *Sermon preached before the Governors of George Heriot's Hospital and others on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 1846 being the Commemoration Day of George Heriot's Birthday*, (Edinburgh, 1847)

bring would be that, 'The parents of a considerable number of boys would have daily intercourse with their children,' and that, 'These boys would be prevented from losing interest in their families.'<sup>40</sup> Again this is in line with Laurie's ideas. Dr Bedford also made suggestions which anticipated those made by Laurie, highlighting the perceived problems experienced by those who must board and, thereby, miss out on the benefits of family life and of what might now be termed 'role models'.

The utmost anxiety is usually shown both by the directors and the resident officials, to study as much as possible the peculiar wants of young people, and the effects of separation from the home circle – the loss to the boy of the gentle influences of mother and sister, and to the girl of the strong influences that insensibly radiate from the character of father and brother, are modified by frequent opportunities of visiting parents and relatives.<sup>41</sup>

The improvements which Bedford suggests include the idea of a greater proportion of day scholars in the hospitals. 'In all hospitals, the resident pupils should have the opportunity of mixing with a still larger number of non resident pupils, in order that the higher standard of the outer world ... might supersede the lower standard which is to be looked for in the little world of an hospital.'<sup>42</sup>

Thus, again, Laurie's suggestions are shown not to be original. However, his most interesting comments are included in his report by way of a qualification. He makes it clear that he does not think that even the implementation of all his recommendations would adequately deal with the 'evils of Hospital training'. They would simply be 'alleviated'.<sup>43</sup> He makes it clear that only the effective closure of the hospitals in their present form would remove them. Finally he says, 'I have been led to conclusions even much larger and antagonistic to the present constitution of things than I have felt myself at liberty to record here.' He also recorded that, 'I have confined myself, however, to such recommendations as tend on the right direction, and do not involve changes which might stir opposition by exciting alarm.' Laurie did not, of course, confine himself to recommending only the more

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Bedford, *An Address to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science given by F W Bedford to their Edinburgh Congress in 1863 entitled 'The Hospital System of Scotland'*. George Hastings (ed.), (London, 1864), 340

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 340

<sup>43</sup> Laurie, *Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 127



moderate improvements; he included the suggestion that the way to remove the evils altogether would be to, 'convert the Houses into Boarding Establishments, and send the boys out for their instruction to the High School, or some similar establishment'.<sup>44</sup> If he genuinely believed that he could say this without 'exciting alarm' then again it is hard not to conclude that he knew himself to be producing a report which would be welcomed. Thus, the Merchant Company were presented with a report from which they could very easily have abstracted only the easier, and perhaps more publicly palatable, recommendations. That the education committee of George Watson's Hospital did not do so but immediately endorsed all of Laurie's recommendations including, crucially, the use of the High School, again suggests strongly that they were presented with the report that they wanted and that they were prepared for dramatic reform before they received it. The fact that the senior boys from George Watson's Hospital did indeed attend classes in the High School in the autumn of 1868 was an important break with the way in which the hospital had been run until then, but it was only a first step towards more major reform. It does seem reasonable to suggest that this first step could not, or at least would not, have been taken without the existence of Laurie's report to give it 'legitimacy'. It is also likely that the later, more dramatic, changes would have been more difficult to implement had the ground not been prepared in this way. There is therefore no doubt that Laurie was an important factor in the process. Having said that, it would seem to be a gross exaggeration to argue that he was the principal motive force behind the changes. That distinction surely belongs to Strong, Boyd, Knox and Thomas.

Although Laurie's submission of his *Report to the Education Committee of the Merchant Company* on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1868 marks the end of his formal involvement with the Merchant Company, and although here is no mention of him in connection with the Act of 1869 or the subsequent actions of the Merchant Company in further reforming their hospitals, other than to have his evidence, given to Argyll in 1866, again quoted, it did not mark the end of his involvement with endowment reform. The Merchant Company went on to reform their hospital schools still further and there was legislation in both England and Scotland, followed by the setting up, in 1872, of the Colebrooke Commission to examine

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 130, 127

endowments in Scotland. Laurie was appointed to be secretary to this and thus played a major role in formulating its recommendations.

## Chapter IX – Endowment Reform post-1872

### Aftermath of Laurie's Reports

The changes which took place in the operation of the hospitals, and in particular in those controlled by the Merchant Company, in the two years following Laurie's report, form an important part of the development of education in Scotland in general and in Edinburgh in particular. Whether or not that report could be said to have caused these changes rather than simply paving the way for them, it is certain that Laurie himself was an integral part of that development.

Argyll's final report appeared in July 1868 and included the recommendation that, 'it shall be the duty of the General Board to examine the statutes of their (the Hospitals) foundation, and, subject when necessary to the approval of Parliament, to make alterations therein, with a view to the extension of education.'<sup>1</sup> and the Endowed Schools Act, introduced following the Taunton Commission, provided that, 'The Commissioners ... shall have the power to alter the constitution, rights and powers of the Governing Body of an educational endowment ... and to remove a Governing Body.'<sup>2</sup> With legislation for Scotland being prepared it was clear that the power and autonomy of the Merchant Company was under threat and, again, the response was quite remarkable. Given the absence of original records, the best available evidence is now that contained in Heron's *Rise and Progress of the Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh*. Whilst not a primary source, it was written much nearer the time and, as shown by his use of quotations from Merchant Company minute books (ch VIII), Heron, as secretary, would surely have had access to all the relevant papers. Rather than paraphrase what is already a subjective account of events, it seems simplest to quote Heron's account as it stands:

---

<sup>1</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland. Third Report*, xxvii

<sup>2</sup> Public General Acts 1869, Vic 31&32, Ch. 56, Endowed Schools Act

When Parliament met the following February, the Royal Message included a reference to the subject of extending and improving education in Scotland, and two days later – 18th February – Mr Strong sent to Mr Duncan, for consideration, the heads of a proposed Bill applicable to educational endowments. In the covering letter it was stated that the Lord Advocate was advising with Mr W E Forster, Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education (who, it was expected, would introduce the general Education Bill) ‘about the best and most judicious mode of our carrying the object we have in view.’ It was thought well ‘to strike while the iron was hot’, and accordingly Mr Duncan and Mr Strong proceeded to London to interview the Scottish Members of Parliament and representatives of the Government. As appears from Letters Mr Strong wrote on 25th and 26th February to the master, Mr Boyd, in Edinburgh, the result was entirely satisfactory, and a draft Bill which Mr Strong had prepared was put in the hands of the Government officials and ordered to be printed. ‘In short’ Mr Strong wrote, ‘we have got far more than we could ever have anticipated, and all parties are satisfied that this measure will be much welcomed in Scotland and will prove a valuable addition to the benefits expected to be derived from the general Education Bill.’<sup>3</sup>

Heron thus suggests that the bill which was presented to parliament was essentially the work of members of the Merchant Company, although he also suggests that they were acting on their own initiative and that it was not until 30<sup>th</sup> April 1869 that the Company were officially informed of the contents of the bill. They then ‘cordially approved’ its principles. Again, it would appear to have been Strong, and not Laurie, who exerted real influence on subsequent events.

The Endowed Hospitals &c (Scotland) Act of 1869 was, as a result of their efforts, much less prescriptive than its English counterpart. The crucial clauses from the point of view of the Merchant Company were those which recognised in clause 1 that:

It is expedient that provision should be made to enable the governors, managers, and trustees thereof from time to time to apply for and obtain from Parliament power and authority, whereby the usefulness and efficiency of the said hospitals and institutions may be increased, and the benefits thereof extended.<sup>4</sup>

The mechanism by which this power and authority was to be obtained was through application to the Secretary of State and clause 4 stated that:

It shall be lawful for the Secretary of State (ie Home Secretary) to issue a provisional order under his hand and seal of office in relation to the several things mentioned in the foresaid

---

<sup>3</sup> Heron, *The Merchant Company – Its Rise and Progress*, (Edinburgh, 1903), 290

<sup>4</sup> Public General Acts 1869, Vic 32&33, Ch. 39, Endowed Hospitals & (Scotland) Act

petition, either in accordance with the prayer thereof, or with such modifications or alterations as may appear to him to be requisite.<sup>5</sup>

Although any provisional order issued by the Secretary of State did have to be ratified by parliament he was thus given fairly wide-ranging powers.

The bill went through with minimal debate, receiving its second reading at 1am on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1869 which ensured that it attracted little attention in the Commons. It was during the passage of this bill through parliament that Sir Edward Colebrooke entered the debate. On 8<sup>th</sup> June 1869 he moved an 'Address for the issue of a Royal Commission to Inquire into the Endowment and Administration of Endowed Schools and Hospitals in Scotland'.<sup>6</sup> This is important with reference to Laurie because it set in train the events which led to the eventual establishment of the Colebrooke Commission in 1872 and hence to Laurie's appointment as its secretary.

It is also probably significant in relation to that appointment that Colebrooke cited Laurie's evidence to the Argyll Commission:

And when Mr Lawrie (sic) was consulted on a kindred point – namely, the existing means of maintenance for schools in burghs – he said – 'It will one day probably be a question to what extent the large funds mortified for hospital purposes may be turned to the general use, without detriment to the interests of the persons whom the founders specifically intended to benefit.'<sup>7</sup>

Also of interest is Colebrooke's other direct quotation from Laurie. Hansard records Colebrooke as saying:

There are many allusions in the Assistant Commissioners' Reports in proof of the importance of an inquiry; but they all showed that the Commissioners themselves laboured under the impression that the question did not come under their special reference. Mr Lawrie (sic), one of the Assistant Commissioners, summed up his Report with some striking general remarks. He said – 'Since I received your instructions, the question of the hospital system has never been out of my thoughts. I have been led to conclusions even much larger and more antagonistic to the present constitution of things than I have felt myself at here liberty to record. These conclusions, too, have been reached in spite of the fact that the funds are so

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Hansard 1869 Vol 196, 1439

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 1441

well administered and the hospitals as a whole are so faithfully and anxiously conducted as to defy animadversion from the most hostile.’<sup>8</sup>

Here Colebrooke is in error. He is mistaking Laurie’s *Report to the Merchant Company* as a report from an assistant commissioner, which Laurie never was, to Argyll.

The response of Moncreiff, the Lord Advocate, should also be recorded. He seemed to adopt classic delaying tactics. He reminded Colebrooke of the main purpose of the Argyll Commission:

Their main duty was to inquire into elementary education in Scotland. That was the matter for which they were appointed, and was a matter into which they did most carefully inquire; but they thought it was their duty not to relinquish the inquiry altogether until they had made investigation into the middle-class education of Scotland.<sup>9</sup>

However:

It appeared to the Commissioners – and it struck him (the Lord Advocate) very strongly indeed – that until you had settled the question of elementary education – until you had decided on what foundation the education of the country was to be built – it was premature to proceed to deal with the question of middle-class education.<sup>10</sup>

Moncreiff conceded that there were institutions which were most anxious to proceed with reform, hence the bill then before the House and suggested that it was possible that this would be sufficient and that a royal commission might not be necessary. Finally, he suggested that consideration of such a commission should be postponed and Colebrooke agreed to this and it was not until three years later that a royal commission was established to look into endowed schools and hospitals in Scotland.

The bill became law on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1869 with, as was customary, an expiry date, after which it would either have to lapse or come before parliament again. It was the passing of this Act which enabled the Merchant Company to put into effect the next stage of their reforms and on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1870 the Merchant Company held a special meeting to consider a scheme which would:

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 1441

<sup>9</sup> Hansard 1869 Vol 196, 1444

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

Erect or lease boarding-houses for some of the boy and girl foundationers; board out others in families; convert the hospital buildings into day schools; admit day scholars on payment of moderate fees; award some of the foundations by merit; make further provision for the encouragement of meritorious boys and girls; endow a chair in the University for the teaching of the theory and practice of commerce, finance, and mercantile law, etc.; place the whole system of education, which was to be graded, and boarding, under properly qualified instructors.<sup>11</sup>

This scheme was approved by the special meeting, then by a full Merchant Company meeting, then by a conference involving nearly all the hospitals in and around Edinburgh. Authority was granted to petition the Home Secretary on 10<sup>th</sup> June to lay the proposals before both Houses, as required by the 1869 Act. This was done and four large day schools were opened in September. Instead of educating 428 pupils in total, made up of foundationers, day scholars, and free scholars they now enrolled 3,400, of whom 3,200 were fee payers. Crucially the fees were very much lower than those being charged in the many private schools in the city. The impact of the creation of these new schools on the existing small private schools was devastating and led to many closures. Heron tells us that the number of teaching staff employed by the Merchant Company rose from 23 to 290 and these new staff came, for the most part, from the schools which closed. There was considerable distress caused by all this upheaval but, as is easily seen from the pupil recruitment figures, the move was popular with parents. As Heron puts it:

Great educational changes, such as those of the Merchant Company, could not be carried out without disturbing considerably existing educational interests; and it was a matter of regret that reforms which conferred so much benefit on the public should have entailed a measure of loss on proprietary schools in and near Edinburgh. The Governors did what they could to alleviate this loss by giving, in the appointment of teachers, a preference, as far as this could be done without sacrificing efficiency, to those who would be likely to suffer by the new schools.<sup>12</sup>

The governors of Heriot's Hospital were also aware that they were under pressure to reform. However, because there were city councillors on the board by statute their affairs were conducted in the public eye and they were unable to move as swiftly as the Merchant Company and by the time they put forward their scheme to the Lord Advocate the climate of opinion had to some extent changed and to the surprise of the Heriot's governors their scheme was turned down.

---

<sup>11</sup> Heron, *The Merchant Company – Its Rise and Progress*, (Edinburgh, 1903), 292-292

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 299-300

It is beyond dispute that many of the changes which took place during this period were instigated and driven through by the Merchant Company. It is also beyond dispute that Laurie's report to them was an important part of the process, providing, as it did, a degree of 'respectability' or even 'legitimacy' and therefore being available to the Merchant Company as a lever to assist them in bringing about reforms on which they were already determined. However, Laurie's contribution would seem to have been more one of organisation and articulation of ideas which were generally current, rather than one of true originality. It is therefore likely that, had one of the other possible candidates been commissioned to write the reports on the Merchant Company hospitals, events would still have taken much the same course.

#### Colebrooke Commission

The issue of endowment and hospital reform was not allowed to end there and in 1872 the Royal Commission sought by Colebrooke some three years previously was set up. There is no record of how Colebrooke came to be selected to chair this commission but it is reasonable to assume that, since it was he who first suggested it in parliament, his was the name which sprang to mind. The other members of the Commission were Lord Rosebery, who was clearly interested in Scottish educational matters from an early stage in his career, Charles Parker, who was later to chair his own inquiry into the training and supply of teachers in Scotland in 1888, Sir William Maxwell-Stirling, two Advocates in Henry Lancaster and Alexander Sellar, and John Ramsay Esq.<sup>13</sup> The commission was given a wide-ranging brief. It was to:

inquire into the nature and amount of all Endowments in Scotland, the funds of which are wholly or in part devoted, or have been applied, or which can rightly be made applicable to educational purposes, and which have not been reported on by the Commissioners under the Universities (Scotland) Act 1858; also to inquire into the Administration and management of any Hospitals or Schools supported by such Endowments.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> PP 1873 Vol XXVII, *First report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, 1

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 3,4



This gave Colebrooke authority to interview anyone who might have a contribution to make and to come up with such recommendations as he thought fit. It did not, however, bring with it any executive powers.

The choice of Laurie as the commission's secretary is of interest. There is not now any evidence extant on this point so it is possible only to speculate but it seems likely that Colebrooke will have been able to choose his own secretary and Laurie's name was familiar to him. Colebrooke would have known that he was respected within the 'establishment', an important consideration when looking ahead to the eventual standing of any reports the commission might produce, and his *Report to the Merchant Company* had clearly brought him to the attention of a wider audience, as well as attesting to his competence and his interest in and expertise on the subject of endowments. It is safe to assume that Laurie was personally responsible for the direction of, and recommendations contained in, the commission's eventual reports. This is likely on two counts. The secretary to any commission has to write the reports. With so much evidence to be sifted and evaluated, any secretary has a great deal of latitude, if not of substance then certainly of nuance, in the final product. However much the chairman and other members of the commission may direct, the secretary presents the drafts on which they can comment and therefore determines the 'tone' and the relative prominence of the various findings. Secondly, there was a considerable overlap between the findings of the Colebrooke Commission and Laurie's earlier report to the Merchant Company. Colebrooke would have been well aware of Laurie's opinions and earlier recommendations and it is reasonable to infer that he, Colebrooke, was happy with Laurie's views and with his probable influence on the commission's deliberations.

Over the ensuing four years the commissioners took evidence from witnesses covering the entire spectrum of those with an interest in education in Scotland. They produced three reports, one in each of 1873, 1874 and 1875. The first two provide a compendium of evidence given. They, together with further evidence taken prior to the writing of the third report, provide the basis for that report, which contains the principal findings of the commission. As is to be expected, all three reports contain a variety of opinion on a range of subjects, prominent among which are the charging of fees, the importance, or otherwise,

of respecting the founders' wishes and the extent to which, given the changed educational scene after the passing of the 1872 Act, endowments should be used to support higher subjects and secondary education. It is impossible to know how much Laurie was involved in shaping the direction the questioning took but perhaps some indication of an in-built disposition to regard his own views favourably is contained in the chapter in the third report on 'Hospital Endowments'. The relevant passage reads:

In the same year [1868] the Merchant Company of Edinburgh, who were governors of four hospitals, requested Mr Simon S. Laurie to report on them, and to submit the results of his inquiry into the Hospital system as a whole. Mr Laurie had also about the same time reported on Heriot's and Donaldson's. Along with his reports on the separate Institutions, Mr Laurie submitted remarks on the Hospital system, in which he pointed out the nature of the hurtful influences inseparable from hospital life, and traced these to their sources. These reports contributed to the movement for reform.<sup>15</sup>

This, of course, represents Laurie reporting on himself and on his own influence and it is interesting to note that his own assessment is that he 'contributed' to reform – not that he brought it about.

There is so much material contained in successive Colebrooke Commission reports that there is inevitably a problem with selection and presentation. Since the thrust of this chapter is to try to demonstrate Laurie's involvement and influence, rather than to give a full account of all the views expressed, the aim will be to compare the main findings of the Colebrooke Commission with Laurie's known views.

The commission recommended that charity foundationers in hospitals should either be boarded out in families or, where this was not possible, accommodated in boarding-houses.<sup>16</sup> By the time the Colebrooke Commission was established the hospital schools in Edinburgh had radically changed in character so it is not surprising that views expressed by Laurie in 1868 had been overtaken by events. Nevertheless, this recommendation is very much in line with Laurie's earlier injunction to, 'Above all, connect the parents with the Institution, and the children with the parents, by converting the Hospital into weekly

---

<sup>15</sup> PP 1875 Vol XXIX, *Third Report of The Royal Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 220

boarding establishments'.<sup>17</sup> The commission also recommended that, 'Hospital Schools should be thrown open to all, at moderate fees, as Day Schools'.<sup>18</sup> This could hardly be a more direct restatement of Laurie's eleventh recommendation to the Merchant Company, 'Throw open the day classes to a limited number of boys and girls, non-resident, on the payment of a moderate fee.'<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, they thought that, 'Trustees of Educational Endowments not specially connected with Public Schools ... should be empowered to depart from the strict letter of the Trust, with a view to promote Higher instruction.'<sup>20</sup> This re-iterates Laurie's suggestion to the Argyll Commission, some ten years previously, that, 'it will one day probably be a question to what extent the large funds "mortified" for "hospital" purposes may be turned to the general use.'<sup>21</sup> To help bring this about, the Colebrooke Commission recommended that, 'Powers should be given to combine Trusts, and to transfer them to School Boards, with the consent of the Trustees.'<sup>22</sup> This particular recommendation can be traced directly to Laurie's own evidence to the commission. This appears in an appendix to the third Argyll report, as a report on the subject of burgh schools in Banff. In this report, Laurie explains that the effect of distributing bursaries without competition on the grounds, solely, of poverty, has the opposite effect to that which, he says, the testators will have intended and far from promoting the cause of education in the relevant districts, it creates an attitude whereby education is taken for granted, is consequently not valued and is frequently given to those who are not capable of benefiting from it. The suggested remedy is that, 'the numerous petty bursaries should be rolled into a few, attached to the Grammar School, and thrown open to boys coming from the elementary schools in Banff and its vicinity.'<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Laurie, *Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 124

<sup>18</sup> PP 1875 Vol XXIX, *Third Report of The Royal Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, 220

<sup>19</sup> Laurie, *Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 125

<sup>20</sup> PP 1875 Vol XXIX, *Third Report of The Royal Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, 221

<sup>21</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland. Third Report*, 204

<sup>22</sup> PP 1875 Vol XXIX, *Third Report of The Royal Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, Appendix, 223

<sup>23</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Royal Commission to Inquire into Schools in Scotland. Third Report*, 118.

The commission's final recommendation read, 'To carry out these and other reforms, we recommend that an Act be passed conferring the necessary powers on a temporary Executive Commission. Extended powers of dealing with Trusts should also be conferred on the Court of Session.'<sup>24</sup> This is something that Laurie had suggested already in the final paragraph of his 1868 report. 'If it be necessary to obtain extended powers, these might be obtained in very general terms, giving power, in fact, to the governors to make any alterations they see fit, subject to the approval of some constituted authority, such as the Court of Session or the Home Secretary.'<sup>25</sup>

The commission took evidence from representatives of many institutions including Heriot's Hospital, which was the most significant in terms of the public attention it attracted. Essentially, Colebrooke and Laurie were not in sympathy with the way in which it was run. They described the trustees behaviour as 'a remarkable example of disregard of the founder's will.'<sup>26</sup> This was debatable but Colebrooke and Laurie would have liked to have been able to reform the hospital. They wanted it to serve as a purely secondary school, open to all at a modest fee, with an entrance examination to maintain standards. They argued that the outdoor schools should not increase further, though they did not argue for their abolition, viewing them as a suitable place for foundationers until the age of thirteen, at which stage they could be considered for the hospital. They advocated an end to apprentice allowances because they were not tied to merit, an increase in bursaries and a radical widening of the scope of the benefits provided to children from beyond the confines of Edinburgh. All this ran counter to the wishes of the governors. Fortunately for them, Colebrooke did not have executive powers. There was a great deal of debate but little changed at this stage. For this reason, it would be difficult to argue that Laurie had a great influence here. The question of Heriot's was to be re-visited both by Moncreiff and by Balfour until, finally, reform came about in 1885. A large part of this centred on the closure of the outdoor schools, or at least on bringing them under the control of the Edinburgh School Board.

---

<sup>24</sup> PP 1875 Vol XXIX, *Third Report of The Royal Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, Appendix, 223

<sup>25</sup> Laurie, *Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868), 130

<sup>26</sup> PP 1875 Vol XXIX, *Third Report of The Royal Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland)*, 1875, 69

Argyll, and Moncrieff in his defence of Argyll, focussed on elementary education, as did successive Codes and the 1872 Act itself and, as a consequence, it began to look as if secondary education, and in particular its funding, might be marginalised. The official brief of the Colebrooke Commission had been to, ‘inquire into the nature and amount of all Endowments in Scotland’, and this they had done. But both Colebrooke and Laurie were primarily interested in the promotion of secondary education – hence the desire to tap into the resources represented by various endowment funds. So once the commission had run its course Colebrooke and Laurie proceeded to create a new vehicle through which they could continue the work of pressing for improvements in secondary education provision. In 1876 they founded the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education.

#### Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education (APSE)

The new association had its first annual conference on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1876. The president of the association was Colebrooke himself and Laurie was its secretary. The full list of members ran to some one hundred and fifty names and included almost everyone of importance in Scottish educational circles at the time. Of the seven members of the Colebrooke Commission only Henry Lancaster was missing. The Earl of Elgin was one of the vice presidents and the members of the executive committee included among others, Lord Moncrieff, Sir James Ferguson, Lyon Playfair, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, the four university principals, five members of parliament and five university professors.

The association was created to address three specific questions:

1. What were higher subjects and secondary education?
2. Who was secondary education for?
3. What sort of schools could best deliver secondary education to the appropriate pupils?

Laurie provided the answer to the first of these questions, ‘A higher subject is any subject pursued beyond its elements.’<sup>27</sup> This definition is important because it makes it clear that the differences between elementary and secondary education are of degree and not of kind.

---

<sup>27</sup> Laurie, ‘Higher Subjects in Elementary Schools’, *Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 153

Consequently, there is no need for there to be schools which were different in kind to teach these subjects. This accords with Laurie's view that, in the rural districts particularly, the parochial schools could be expected, given suitably qualified schoolmasters, to teach the able pupils until the age of fifteen or so. The short answers to the second were contained in the opening statement of the object of the association:

to extend and improve the Secondary Education of Scotland, so as to secure the benefits of higher instruction to all classes of the community ... The object will be best attained, on the one hand, by promoting higher instruction in Public Schools so far as practicable; and on the other, by carrying out more effectually than has yet been done the scheme proposed by John Knox for the establishment of Secondary Schools or 'Colleges' between the Parish Schools and the Universities.<sup>28</sup>

The Scotsman welcomed the creation of the association but worried that it might prove simply to be a talking shop. On 4<sup>th</sup> November 1878 they described it as having 'an excellent object' and said that, 'if its efforts are wisely directed it may do much toward the accomplishment of that object ... by concentrating the national desires and claims on something within the scope of Government action'. However, the paper, in a curious piece of phraseology, said, 'That there were many speakers is not a thing to be complained of: it was rather a thing to be thankful for considering the weight and position of most of the men. That there was much speaking was an inevitable, though less gratifying, circumstance.' Their concern was that the raising of too many topics, such as boarding on the English model, the teaching of classics, the question of parental input to the curriculum and so on, would divert the association from its primary function which was, in the words of Lord Elgin, 'To bring secondary education within the reach of every member of the community, so that even the poorest lad in the country, if he chose to exert himself, might have the opportunity of gaining it.'<sup>29</sup>

Laurie produced a very thorough set of proposals setting out the objectives of the association and explaining how the whole of Scotland could be properly supplied with secondary education. These proposals were first presented to the association in November 1877, subsequently presented to a wider public in a paper read to the Social Science

---

<sup>28</sup> 'Memorandum of the Objects of the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education', papers of the Duke of Buccleuch, GD/224/810/8, NAS

<sup>29</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1876

Meeting in Aberdeen in 1879, and later published in *The Training of Teachers* in 1882. This paper is of great importance because not only does it set out very clearly the objectives of the association and, by extension, of Laurie, but the 1882 edition also contains footnotes which testify very clearly to the influence of the association. Laurie stated that the association aimed at bringing about reform of the endowed institutions of the country because, 'these endowments, so far from promoting, are at this moment a bar in the way of the higher instruction.'<sup>30</sup> This was to be achieved by, 'securing an executive body authorised to deal with the whole question of endowments' and he says that, 'the Association has again and again brought the necessity of this before Government: so far with a kind of success; for Government has promised to take action'. The footnote records that, 'A Bill has been more than once introduced and is expected to pass in this year (1882).'<sup>31</sup>

Laurie set out a scheme whereby there would be schools of the first, second and third ranks to provide secondary education. This was not a new idea. The Taunton Commission had also recommended that there should be three grades of school. However, there was a significant difference in the proposals. Taunton's idea was that these three grades should be distinguished by the ages up to which they would take pupils. Thus, the third grade would take pupils up to the age of 14 or so, whilst the second grade would carry on to 16 and the first grade to 18. Laurie is uncharacteristically vague in his definitions of schools of first, second and third rank, indeed he does not define 'first rank' at all saying simply that, 'It would be as impracticable as it would be unnecessary to have schools of the first rank in all these places.'<sup>32</sup> (He had previously identified 91 burghs and towns which he said ought to have high schools.) He went on to argue that, 'There are, however, 11 towns which, either because of their population, position or educational history, or for all these reasons combined, ought, it seems to me, to have schools of the first rank.' These eleven towns or burghs would be: Aberdeen, Ayr, Dumfries, Dundee, Edinburgh, Elgin, Glasgow, Greenock, Inverness, Paisley, Perth, and Stirling. He then listed seventy eight towns or

---

<sup>30</sup> Laurie, 'Secondary Education in Scotland', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 191

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 191 - 192

<sup>32</sup> Laurie, 'Secondary Education in Scotland', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 193

burghs which he said would need schools of the second or third rank. These places were chosen partly on size but also because they all either had high schools already or at least the basis for one. He did give definitions of second and third rank. A school of the second rank is one which ‘carries boys as far as say the medical Preliminary Examinations.’ A high school of the third rank was simply ‘an advanced department of a primary school.’ These schools would be in addition to the ‘reformed endowed schools.’ Laurie regarded this as eminently achievable. ‘This is no great task. What we want is an organising body with adequate powers – the same body, perhaps, as that entrusted with the reform of endowments.’ Naturally, finance is a major issue but Laurie is confident that this need not be a problem. ‘It so happens that high schools in these towns already exist, and that the existing endowments and fees are such that the judicious expenditure of £1000 a year, and such an interpretation of the 64<sup>th</sup> section of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 as would enable school boards to rate for the repair, cleaning, maintenance as well as for the erection of buildings (which they are at last permitted to do) would suffice to place them all on a perfectly satisfactory footing.’ The footnote records that, ‘This power is now given by the Act of 1878.’<sup>33</sup>

Laurie was a strong supporter of the parochial schools but recognised that a system based entirely on these was economically unsustainable in the less populated parts of the country. He made it clear that he did not see the development of these different routes to university as being in competition with each other, saying:

By all means let promising country lads be drafted into high schools before proceeding to the University; but inasmuch as this drafting is, generally speaking, impracticable before a boy is about fifteen years of age, it is urged that up to this age the country school should give him his preparation.

The footnote points out that this recommendation had subsequently been included in those made by ‘The Endowed Institutions Commission’. In order for the parochial schools to be able to give boys this preparation, of course, the schoolmasters would have to be properly trained and Laurie says that, ‘This does not involve the abolition of the existing Normal School system, but merely the institution of a parallel or co-operative training in the

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 193 - 195



Universities.’ The footnote records that, ‘This object is now substantially attained by modifications in the Scotch Code.’<sup>34</sup>

This paper is authentic Laurie. It is extremely thorough and very well presented demonstrating his capacity for clarity of thought and hard work and for articulating the collective views others. He himself did not make claims of originality, in connection with this paper at least. He records within it that ‘No-one who reads the names of its members, comprising leading men of all political parties, can doubt that the programme of the Association expresses the mind of Scotland.’<sup>35</sup>

In April 1877, the association presented a memorial to the Duke of Richmond, then Lord President of the Committee of Council on Education, which was printed in full in the *Educational News*.<sup>36</sup> This dealt primarily with the way in which Act of 1872 and the ‘remuneration offered in the Code for the different classes of subject’ had tended to act as a disincentive for schoolmasters to spend their time on the more difficult subjects such as Latin, Greek, modern languages and mathematics. In essence, the complaint was that because these subjects attracted the same payment but took much more time and effort fewer pupils would be given the chance to study them. These subjects were essential for entry to the universities and hence the professions. The memorialists acknowledged that the problem was less acute in urban areas and said that, ‘the promotion of secondary schools in populous centres is a leading part of the programme of this Association’. Nevertheless, they also stated that, ‘The connection between the Universities and the primary schools has been peculiar to Scotland and has been of especial value in the rural districts, in which a sufficient supply of efficient secondary schools does not exist.’<sup>37</sup> This would naturally have the effect of disadvantaging those who lived in the rural districts. They urged a revision of the code to correct this imbalance. Laurie is not mentioned in connection with the preparation of this memorial, except in so far as he was secretary to the association. However, its theme is one which clearly accords with Laurie’s views. He had long maintained that primary schools should teach higher subjects to those for whom it was

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 196 - 197

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> *Educational News*, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1877

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

appropriate and, through the Dick bequest, had long worked to promote the university subjects in the north east. The memorial goes on to say that, although the actual number of scholars passing special subjects was rising, the increase was very small when considered alongside the increased number of pupils attending school and they argued that the standard of attainment of students who went directly from school to university was actually lower than it had been. They ascribe this partly to the operation of the code and partly to the fact that fewer teachers were attending university as part of their training. This in itself could have been a consequence of the operation of the code. As evidence for these assertions, the memorialists cited figures taken from the recent Church of Scotland training colleges entrance examinations which, they say, were in line with those for the other colleges. These figures and, probably, the line of argument, would have been supplied by Laurie.

The *Educational News* of 28<sup>th</sup> April 1877 noted with regret that, 'Any authoritative notice that has, as yet, been taken of the statement put forth by the Executive Committee of the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education, has been of a most unsatisfactory and misleading sort.' The Duke of Richmond latched onto the one half sentence in the memorial which seemed to give government an excuse to ignore, at least temporarily, the rest; 'The Committee (of the Privy Council on Education) have observed with satisfaction that the number of scholars who have passed in special subjects since 1874 is largely on the increase.' They ignored the rest of the evidence as cited above. The editorial went on to give fulsome support for the work of the association, saying that, 'As everybody knows, this (secondary) is the weak part of our whole educational arrangements. There is a missing link as between the primary schools and the Universities.' They also give support to the statement of the Endowed Schools Commission (Colebrooke), saying that:

Their report is no whit overstrained when they declare that 'secondary schools, in the proper sense of the term, that is, schools which begin the instruction of their pupils when the elementary schools end, prepare them for the higher class of Civil Service appointments, and for the University, can scarcely be said to have any place in the educational economy of Scotland.' Clearly this ought not to be so.

The editorial ends with what is in effect a ringing endorsement of another of the Commission's recommendations quoting Bishop Temple when he said, 'There can be no better way of benefiting the poor than by setting up schools for the higher instruction, and

affording to their children the means, by exhibitions and bursaries, of reaching these schools.' And then asks, 'When will our Scottish representatives, duly pondering the condition of affairs, take heart and grace, and force Government to do its duty in the premises?'<sup>38</sup>

It is always difficult to say exactly how much influence any organisation or individual had on events, especially when these events are part of a much larger process of evolution. What is clear is that the association achieved its aim of raising awareness of the problem of secondary education, whether defined as the establishment of separate schools or as the teaching of higher subjects in elementary schools. As Laurie put it, 'Its very existence has called attention to the national needs, and stirred up a strong desire in many localities to do for themselves what the Association aims at.'<sup>39</sup>

### Legislation

1878 saw the enactment of two bills relating to endowed schools and hospitals in Scotland. The first provided for the establishment of a new royal commission under the chairmanship of Lord Moncrieff. This commission was to be given powers which Colebrooke had not had. It was empowered, after due process, to issue provisional orders for the reform of endowments and of the governance of endowed institutions. In that respect it was in effect a re-instatement of the provisions of the 1869 Act which had, as was the normal custom, lapsed after a period of two years and had not been renewed. This is easily seen from the introductory wording of the two Acts:

1869: It is expedient that provision should be made to enable the governors, managers, and trustees thereof from time to time to apply for and obtain from Parliament power and authority, whereby the usefulness and efficiency of the said hospitals and institutions may be increased, and the benefits thereof extended.<sup>40</sup>

1878: Whereas there are numerous endowed schools and hospitals and other endowed institutions in Scotland, and it is expedient that provision should be made to enable the governors, managers, trustees, or other governing body thereof to apply for and obtain from

---

<sup>38</sup> *Educational News*, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1877

<sup>39</sup> Laurie, 'Secondary Education in Scotland', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 198

<sup>40</sup> Public Bills 1868-69 32 & 33 Vic Vol IV, Ch 39, Endowed School & (Scotland) Act

Parliament power and authority whereby changes may be made in the government and management of said schools, hospitals, institutions, or in the application of their endowments, and at the same time provision may be made for upholding the standard of education which has hitherto been maintained in Scotland.<sup>41</sup>

The passing of these Acts marked the end of the work of APSE and the *Educational News* recorded that, 'The Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education seems to feel that recent legislation has left it very little to do.'<sup>42</sup> Laurie, too, seemed to be satisfied with the position which had been reached. In an address entitled *Higher Subjects in Public or Elementary Schools* to an educational congress held in Edinburgh, which was printed in full in successive editions of the *Educational News* on 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February 1879, he declared that, with the passing of the 1878 Act, 'for the first time, the Reformation ideas of a Scottish educational system are legislatively recognised' and, 'The work now before the country is one of administration only.'<sup>43</sup> He asserted further that, 'The question of Quantity being thus settled, the attention of us all is now naturally directed to *quality*.'<sup>44</sup>

#### Moncreiff Commission

The newly established Moncreiff Commission continued to consider the whole question of educational endowments, together with individual schemes for reform.. However, in the context of Laurie's personal influence on this particular issue it was not as significant as its predecessor. The commission did take evidence from Laurie but only on specific issues. He was told that, 'We are anxious to have your views generally upon the working of the existing system of Privy Council grants, the Revised Code, and other matters that bear on the instruction of the people.' To which he replied, 'I had intended to speak of the bearing of the Code and the present administrative system upon that part of the old Scotch parochial work which relates to the higher subjects of education rather than upon the general education of the country.'<sup>45</sup> Laurie's evidence on these issues is of interest with regard to his views on, for example, payment by results and the place of science in the curriculum

---

<sup>41</sup> Public General Acts 1878 41 & 42 Vic Ch 48, Endowed institutions (Scotland) Act

<sup>42</sup> *Educational News*, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1878

<sup>43</sup> *Educational News*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1879

<sup>44</sup> *Educational News*, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1879

<sup>45</sup> PP 1881 Vol XXXVI, *Report by the Commissioners on Endowed Institutions in Scotland*,

and they are therefore considered in the appropriate chapters. However, it is clear that his views on the wider issues raised by educational endowments were no longer being sought. Indeed, two surviving letters written by Gillespie, the commission secretary, to Laurie suggest that Laurie, far from being central to the process, as he had been with the previous commission, had become peripheral to it and perhaps even a nuisance:

14<sup>th</sup> April 1879 from Gillespie to Laurie.

My Dear Sir,

It is not possible to let you have another revisal of your evidence. My instructions forbid it and the printers have complained already that the subsequent evidence has been distreated by corrections made by the earlier witness. I trust that it does not need much correction, as it would be a matter of regret if the Commissioners had not got your views fully before them.

The use of the word ‘another’ in the first line is no doubt significant:

10<sup>th</sup> February 1880

I was sorry to miss you yesterday at the Normal College. My instructions are to give the Reports of the Commissioners to (interested?) parties only, and I am not sure that your connexion with the Provisional Order is such as to entitle you to one. I hope, however, to see you on the subject when I return to Edinburgh on or after Saturday.<sup>46</sup>

From this it is clear that Laurie asked for a preview of the commissioners’ report, to which he was not entitled. Perhaps he considered that his status as secretary to the Colebrooke Commission should have given him preferential treatment. Perhaps also it would have been possible for Gillespie to let him have an early sight of it, as a courtesy, without behaving improperly, though Gillespie’s instructions may have been very strict. There does not now seem to be any record of them. In any case, it seems likely that Laurie was not regarded as being central to the work or to the conclusions of the Moncrieff Commission.

### Balfour Commission

The passing of the 1882 Education Endowments (Scotland) Act marked another significant stage in the evolution of the use of educational endowments. This Act established yet another royal commission, this time under the chairmanship of Lord Balfour of Burleigh,

---

<sup>46</sup> Letter Book of the Endowments Commission No 1, ED2-3, NAS

who had previously been a member both of the Moncrieff Commission and of the executive committee of APSE. This commission was given executive powers which its predecessors had not had. Clause 5 provided that, 'Subject to the conditions herein-after contained the Commissioners shall have power to prepare drafts of schemes for the future government and management of educational endowments, which schemes may provide for altering the conditions and provisions of such endowments.'<sup>47</sup> This being in addition to a continuing provision for endowed institutions to be permitted to submit their own schemes for reform. At the same time, clause 7 provided that, 'it shall be the duty of the Commissioners in reorganising said educational endowments to have special regard to making provision for secondary or higher or technical education in Scotland.'<sup>48</sup> These provisions were therefore in line with recommendations III, XI and XIII contained in the third report of the Colebrooke Commission, published in 1875 and detailed above.

Although this commission sat for seven years and reported five times Laurie's immediate connection with it and hence his potential influence on its findings was relatively minor. He gave evidence to this commission twice. The first time was on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1885 when, along with Professor Calderwood, he represented the interests of Edinburgh University with regard to the Bell Residue Fund and the funding of the chair of education at the university. Their interest lay in trying to secure more funding for the two chairs of education, in St Andrews and Edinburgh. Laurie was again called as a witness on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1885, this time with regard to the Dick bequest. On neither occasion was he required to give evidence on the application of endowments to schools.

As has been seen, the Acts of 1878 and 1882 and the Scotch Code all brought significant changes in line with the objectives of APSE, which was itself a consequence of the work of the Colebrooke Commission and it would surely be unreasonable to deny that these changes were, in large part, a direct consequence of first the Commission and then APSE. Dr Webster, a member of parliament for Aberdeen, certainly thought that they were. Addressing an educational congress in that city on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1883 on the subject of 'Educational Endowments', he praised the work of the Colebrooke Commission, saying

---

<sup>47</sup> Public General Statutes 1882, Vic 45&46, Ch 59, Endowed Schools (Scotland) Act

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

that it had, 'fairly opened the eyes of the country to the vast amount of funds in Scotland destined for education but greatly wasted' and, 'It pronounced final judgement and condemnation on the hospital system.' But most importantly Webster also said that 'With the exception of the effect this Report may have had on the granting of the Commission of 1878, it remained dormant until now. But there is no doubt of the material influence which its facts and its conclusions have had on the legislation of 1882.'<sup>49</sup> Laurie, as secretary to the commission and to the association must, as its most prolific and powerful advocate in print and from the platform, take considerable credit for this. Nevertheless, because Laurie was purportedly articulating the findings of the commission and the views of the members of the association, and because his own ideas were not of themselves original, it is difficult to quantify his personal influence. Presumably, even with different secretaries, these two bodies, by virtue of their membership, were bound to be influential. However, Laurie was the secretary in each case and his abilities as a communicator and the energy, motivation and organisational powers he brought to both roles certainly contributed very significantly indeed to the success they had in bringing about change.

---

<sup>49</sup> *Educational News*, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1883

## Chapter X - Curriculum 1860-1873

The aim of the next two chapters is to consider the extent to which Laurie influenced the development of the curriculum within Scottish schools. The first parliamentary grants for education, approved in 1833, were initially only for buildings. With the creation of these grants came the realisation that there would be a need for more central control and the Committee of Council on Education, a committee of the Privy Council, in effect the first education department, was established in 1839. This committee gradually increased its scope and also the range of purposes for which grants became available, first to the maintenance of buildings and then to the training of teachers, mainly through the pupil teacher scheme established in 1846. This increased involvement in the development of education led to a realisation that the provision of elementary education was very inconsistent and that there was a need for a more coherent system. During the 1850s successive bills were introduced into parliament which aimed to take at least the first steps towards establishing a 'national' system of education in Scotland. For a number of reasons, not least of which was opposition from the Established Church, these bills failed and a succession of royal commissions was established to look into the state of education. The first of these, under the chairmanship of the Duke of Newcastle, was set up in 1858 to, 'Inquire into the present state of popular education in England and to consider and report on what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of people.'<sup>1</sup> Before the commission formally reported in 1861, its minutes and probable recommendations were made available to the Committee of Council on Education and were, in part, used to help create the first 'code'. From that date, education, in both Scotland and England, was increasingly centrally directed and this was done through the medium of the annual 'code' and, from time to time, through legislation. The approach taken here, therefore, will be to attempt to establish whether or not Laurie influenced either the codes or the legislation.

---

<sup>1</sup> PP 1861 Vol XXI, *Royal Commission to inquire into the State of popular Education in England, Report*, 1



Since the bills relating to reform of schools in Scotland introduced in 1850, 1851, 1854 and 1855 pre-dated Laurie's tenure as secretary to the education committee of the Church of Scotland he will have had no part in influencing their progress. Two separate bills were introduced in 1856 relating to schools in Scotland, one dealing specifically with burgh schools and the other with parochial schools. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no mention of either of these bills in the education committee minutes for that year. Again, neither of these bills reached the statute book. Since neither the Church of Scotland nor Laurie was invited to give evidence to the Newcastle Commission it is safe to say that the first opportunity which he had to influence government action in relation to education in Scotland came with the introduction of the Code in 1860.

#### Code and Revised Code

The first code was relatively short, thirty three pages in all, and did not lay down any specific conditions with regard to the curriculum in elementary schools, although it did with respect to what pupil teachers were expected to study. Laurie claimed, in an address to the Educational Institute of Scotland at Stirling in 1889, that, 'I myself at first considered the Code a distinct advance in the right direction, and wrote an anonymous article in support of it.'<sup>2</sup> Although it is impossible to be sure, this almost certainly referred to an article which appeared in *The Museum* in 1862 under the name 'Scotus'.<sup>3</sup> The Revised Code, which appeared a year later was a very different matter. Essentially, there were three main provisions which represented a radical new departure in the way in which grants were to be issued. The Newcastle Commission had suggested that, 'A grant shall be paid out of the county rate in respect of every child who passes an examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic.'<sup>4</sup> Robert Lowe, the then Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, picked this up and refined it, thus introducing 'payment by results'. Under the Revised Code grants were to be made on the basis of attendance on the specific day of inspection;<sup>5</sup> there was to be a detailed prescription of the curriculum to be followed and of

---

<sup>2</sup> *Educational News*, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1889

<sup>3</sup> Scotus, 'Scotland and the Code', *Museum*, (January 1862, Edinburgh), Vol I, No IV, 491

<sup>4</sup> PP 1861 Vol XXI, *Royal Commission to inquire into the State of popular Education in England, Report, Vol I*, 337

<sup>5</sup> PP 1861 Vol XLVIII, *Minute of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education Establishing a Revised Code of Regulations*, 8

standards required and specific sums of money were to be deducted for each pupil who failed to pass in any one of reading writing and arithmetic<sup>6</sup> and, in order to aid this process, pupils were to be divided into four age groups.<sup>7</sup>

This provoked a widespread reaction both in Scotland and England and the record of *Correspondence and Memorials on Revised Code by Authorities of any Educational Society, Board, Committee, or Training School*<sup>8</sup> contains a total of 104 responses, all of them questioning the provisions of the code to a greater or lesser extent. There were ten responses from Scotland, six from individual Free Church Presbyteries, one from the ‘Provost, Magistrates, and Council of Musselburgh’ and one each from the education committees of the Free Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Scotland. These respondents were of one mind in their objections to the new code and the minutes of the Free Church education committee record that:

No difference of opinion on the subject of what should be taught, or on the subject of the manner of teaching whether in the religious or in the secular department, prevails among the general body of the Scottish people; and, with inconsiderable exceptions, the Scottish Churches are at one.<sup>9</sup>

There is, however, no record in the minutes of any of the Church education committees of joint discussions of the issues. Nevertheless, the claim that there was agreement on the issues is borne out by the individual submissions to the Committee of Council on Education. The most thorough of the submissions from the Churches was the one from the education committee of the Church of Scotland (ECCS). It was in the form of a memorial over the name of Dr Cook, the Convenor of the committee and their minutes record the process by which the memorial came to be written. The first mention of this occurs in their September minutes, (no specific date is recorded), in which it states that, ‘The Convener read a statement drawn up by the Secretary ... The Convener ordered copies of this paper to be circulated among members with a view to a future meeting and a probable deputation

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 9

<sup>8</sup> PP 1862 Vol XLI, *Education (Revised Code)*, *Copies of correspondence*

<sup>9</sup> Free Church Education Committee, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1861, CH3/1429/5, NAS

on the subject.<sup>10</sup> There is no record of the paper itself but the minutes of 10<sup>th</sup> October state that:

The list of Objections to the Revised Code drawn up by the Secretary ... was read ... and the Secretary requested to draw up a Report on the subject in the terms which might be used in bringing the hearing of the new Regulations before Their Lordships of the Privy Council preserving the general objects of the Code as in themselves desirable to secure.<sup>11</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that this paper was an updated version of the one originally referred to in September. The committee considered it in detail and by the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1862 they had drawn up a very thorough memorial, which they then sent in to the Privy Council. This was clearly a direct development of Laurie's paper and Laurie's was the dominant influence on its substance.

Laurie had perceived several threats in the Revised Code. Articles 40 and 47(a) taken together seemed to imply that grants could be reduced in instances where pupils had reached the required standards in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but had then done badly, or been taught inefficiently, in some one or more higher subject, which would be a clear incentive not to attempt advanced work. Article 44 meant that it would not be in the interests of school managers to admit pupils below the age of 6 and article 41(d), which stated that 'No claim may be made on account of – Scholars once passed in group IV',<sup>12</sup> would mean that it would be in the interests of managers to get rid of pupils over the age of 11. Finally, he pointed out that measuring attendance on one particular day would make the income of the school, 'dependent on the capriciousness of parents, or the health or occupations of the children'.<sup>13</sup> Each of these issues was recorded in committee and each survived in essence in the final version of the memorial which was eventually submitted. It is interesting that the memorial began by expressing broad support for the Revised Code:

The Education Committee of the Church of Scotland ... are of the opinion that the Revised Code, in so far as it aims at encouraging more regular attendance at school, promoting evening schools, estimating results before making grants, throwing greater responsibility on

---

<sup>10</sup> ECCS, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1861, CH1/43/2, NAS

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> PP Vol XLVIII 1861, *Minute of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education Establishing a Revised Code of Regulations*, 9

<sup>13</sup> ECCS, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1861, CH1/43/2, NAS

school managers, and, in connexion with this, simplifying payments, is well worthy of their support.<sup>14</sup>

indicating that the Church recognised that there was a need for better and clearer regulation of the conditions on which grants were to be made and even signifying acceptance of some form of payment by results. However, they also made it clear that they did not believe that proper attention had been given to the differences between the educational systems in England and Scotland. 'The remaining points against which the committee would state their objections have special reference to Scotland. Had the Royal Commission extended their inquiries to this country, it is not probable that the clauses in question would have been made operative here.'<sup>15</sup>

The response from the Free Church was shorter although they did address the same issues. They pointed out that, 'the educational condition of Scotland differs widely from that of England, that her primary schools, unlike those of England, are closely related to her intermediate institutions and her universities' and that, 'The proposal to group together children from three to seven years of age, and to subject them to an examination which only those from six to seven can be expected to pass, is tantamount to the withdrawal of Government grants in aid, for the mental and moral training of children in infant schools.' They also argued that, 'excluding from competition, after the first successful examination, all those who are above 11 years of age, must paralyze every effort to secure protracted school attendance' and, finally, that the Revised Code would discourage prolonged attendance at school and penalise rural parochial schools. This was because:

The greatest moral triumphs appearing in this country, are the successful struggles of the working classes to keep their children for a protracted period at school; but these the public legislation contemplated by this Minute tends to set aside. ... In thinly inhabited rural parishes, and in the more densely populated town districts, where the masses are migratory, the difficulty of maintaining efficient schools, which is at present felt, will be seriously increased.

The memorial ends by expressing the hope that, 'a comprehensive measure will be introduced to Parliament, a national system, framed to meet the educational condition of

---

<sup>14</sup> PP 1862 Vol XLI, *Education (Revised Code) Copies of correspondence*, 107

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

Scotland'.<sup>16</sup> The response from the Episcopal Church was shorter still though it too made essentially the same points, saying that they, 'cannot but unite with the great body of managers throughout the country'.<sup>17</sup> They feared that the policy of focussing purely on attendance and results would remove the ability of inspectors to take account of local factors and they were, 'concerned to observe that my Lords propose to withdraw the encouragement to attendance at school after the age of 11 years.'<sup>18</sup>

The minutes of 16th January 1862 of the education committee of the Church of Scotland record that, as well as submitting their views in writing, 'The Rev Dr Cook and the Secretary were appointed a Deputation in pursuance of a previous meeting to wait on Lord Granville and the Vice-President to support the Memorial of 4th January.'<sup>19</sup> The education committee minutes of 13<sup>th</sup> February 1862 contain a detailed account of the response to that meeting. It was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, when Dr Cook and Laurie met with 'Lord Granville, the Vice-President Mr Lowe and Mr Lingen.'<sup>20</sup> They were able to report that, 'They were well received and the statements made in support of the first part of the Memorial – that namely which bears on Elementary Schools –were responded to in such a way as to lead to the expectation that many of the modifications suggested by the committee would be given effect to.' This is not to say that all their objections to the Revised Code were accepted. Perhaps most significantly they had to report that, 'There was no decided disposition to recognise pupils above 12 years of age.'<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, this meeting clearly puts Laurie at the centre of discussions directly with the Privy Council and it is evident that the representations made by the Church of Scotland, along with others, did affect government policy.

As a consequence of all the pressure, the *Minute of the Committee of Council of 23<sup>rd</sup> February* 1862 records that, 'In Scotland, grants shall continue to be made as before

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 101 - 102

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 20

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> ECCS, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1862, CH1/43/2, NAS

<sup>20</sup> ECCS, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1862, CH1/43/2, NAS

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

Minute of 29<sup>th</sup> July 1861 until further directions are given.’<sup>22</sup> In the event, ‘payment by results’ as envisaged in the Revised Code never came fully into effect in Scotland. A minute from the Council on Education, issued in 1864, approving instructions to inspectors of schools in Scotland stipulated that, ‘The Revised Code, so far as payments to elementary schools are concerned, is suspended in Scotland until 30 June 1865.’ but that, ‘You will continue strictly to inspect and examine schools according to the forms and instructions of the Revised Code. Your duty is the same as if the examination of children individually, according to Article 40 of the Revised Code, had been the prescribed method of inspection under the Code of 1860.’<sup>23</sup> Thus, even if the full force of the Revised Code was never felt, it will nevertheless have had an effect on the way in which schoolmasters directed their focus in the classroom.

Given the establishment of the Newcastle and Clarendon Commissions to examine education in England, the Argyll Commission, to inquire into the state of education in Scotland was the next logical step. Whether or not it would have been set up when it was without the reaction in Scotland to the Revised Code is impossible to determine but R. D. Anderson writes that, ‘Outcry against the Code was so strong in Scotland that in 1864 the government appointed the Argyll commission to report on the general state of Scottish education.’<sup>24</sup> This outcry did not come only from the Churches; the universities were very much involved as well. Certainly, the strong reaction in Scotland to Lowe’s perceived failure to understand that the situation north of the border was different and his apparent desire simply to impose an ‘English’ Code, based on a royal commission which had been established to look solely at English education, had a very significant effect. In the short term, the Revised Code was not applied in Scotland. In the medium term, the Argyll Commission was established to do for Scotland what the Newcastle, Clarendon and later Taunton Commissions had done for England. In the longer term separate legislation was passed for Scotland in 1872 and from 1873 onwards there was to be a Scottish code, which differed in significant respects from the English one. It would be impossible to identify

---

<sup>22</sup> PP 1862 Vol XLI, *Committee of Council: Minute Confirming Alterations to the Education Code*, 3

<sup>23</sup> PP 1864 Vol XLIV, *Committee of Council on Education. Minute approving instructions to Inspectors of Schools (Scotland)*, 1

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, (Oxford, 1983), 105

Laurie's contribution to this process in such a way as to ascribe specific developments directly to him. However, there can be no doubt that the Church of Scotland's was one of the most powerful voices in the debate, and no doubt, too, that their response was very much generated by Laurie. To that extent, Laurie cannot but be described as a central figure in one of the most crucial decades in the history of education in Scotland in the nineteenth century.

### Argyll Commission

Presumably as a consequence of the evidence presented to it from many sources, including the education committee of the Church of Scotland and Laurie himself as an individual, the reports which the Argyll Commission presented were, in the event, fairly conservative in tone. They dealt more with the overall provision, and financing, of education in Scotland, rather than with curricular matters. In doing so they recognised that, 'The existing schools are in a large measure defective'<sup>25</sup> but took a gradualist approach towards the setting up of a national system of education. Essentially, Argyll proposed that this should arise out of a development, rather than a scrapping, of the parochial system:

The conclusion at which we have arrived is, that by judicious improvement of the Parochial or National schools, and by taking advantage of the existing schools outside that system, combined with a reasonable modification of the rules on which Privy Council grants are administered, and the extension of Government inspection, the existing schools may be rendered thoroughly efficient; and we also think that provision may be made under which these schools may all, in time, assume a National character.<sup>26</sup>

It was also clear that the longer term aim of the Argyll recommendations was to eliminate denominationalism from the system noting that:

Since the passing of the 1861 Act no religious test has been required of the schoolmaster, who may therefore belong to any denomination. It appears, however ... that the appointment of schoolmasters in the parochial schools ... has been almost entirely confined to members of the Established Church ... schoolmasters ought in all instances to be selected without regard to denominational distinctions.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland) Second Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners*, clxxiv

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, clxxv

In 1869, following the publication of the Argyll Reports, a bill was introduced, again by the Lord Advocate Moncreiff, which was based closely on its recommendations. Again, the churches took a close interest in its passage and again the Church of Scotland, through its education committee, made representations by means of memorials and of personal representation. Laurie, as secretary was inevitably central to this process. The problems, as the Church saw it, centred on the lack of provision for religious education, the future burden on the rates, the lack of assurance that the proposed new management committees would be competent to run the schools and the threat to the denominational system, and these were expressed in a statement which went out from the committee, over the name of its Convenor Dr Cook, in April 1869 in response to the draft bill.<sup>28</sup> In the event, the Lord Advocate's bill, although it scraped through in the Commons in a somewhat watered down form in 1869, was rejected in the Lords. When Moncreiff relinquished the office of Lord Advocate, to become a judge, he was succeeded by George Young who, after the passing of the 1870 Education Act for England and Wales, re-introduced a bill for Scotland. This bill was more radical than Moncreiff's had been, showing less concern for the rights of heritors and including a clause providing for compulsory education for all between the ages of 5 and thirteen, albeit with some exceptions. It did not, however, reconsider those clauses which had caused most concern to the Church. Consequently, the education committee minutes of the meetings held in February and March 1871<sup>29</sup> re-visit exactly the same worries as had been expressed in 1869 and these were again submitted in memorial form to parliament. Their submissions certainly have the merit of consistency over the years. They seek to preserve the parochial tradition by pointing out that:

The most important and hurtful consequence flowing from the institution of the new Local Board, as proposed by the Bill, is that it supersedes the existing 'Parochial Schools Board', and thus subverts a system which has worked well in the past ... by that happy combination in them of primary and secondary instruction, whereby they have connected the humbler classes with the Universities.

They argued for the retention of religious instruction by citing previous legislation. 'Again the religious instruction in Parochial Schools is secured by Statute (Clause 12 of the Act of 1861).' And they continued to argue that the bill was larger in its scope than was necessary:

---

<sup>28</sup> ECCS, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1869, CH1/43/3 NAS

<sup>29</sup> ECCS, February and March 1871, CH1/43/3 NAS



For these and other reasons the Bill now before the House, while containing many excellent provisions, is, in the opinion of the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland, - First, larger and more ambitious in its scope than either the educational condition or public opinion of the country requires. Secondly, it is certain to be hurtful to the education of the country if the Parochial Schools are not taken out of the Bill ... Fourthly it will destroy all securities for Religious Instruction.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly, the Church of Scotland worked hard to try to influence parliament. Between January 1869 and March 1872 there were no fewer than fifteen occasions on which either Cook or Laurie, or both, are recorded as having visited London or met with the Lord Advocate or members of parliament in Edinburgh. The minutes also contain a record of six written submissions. However, all this activity was in the end to little purpose and the bill became law in 1872, with no concessions directly traceable to the Church's representations. Laurie had been closely involved at every stage and, following the passing of the Act, the minutes record the appreciation of the committee for his hard work:

The Act having been passed the Committee wanted to record their sense of the services of Mr. Laurie over this and former Education Bills ... The Committee during the whole of this period have been able to rest with entire confidence on Mr. Laurie's thorough knowledge of the character and amount of Education in Scotland, on his accurate perception of the extent and character of the changes proposed, and on his fidelity to the principles which the Church desired to maintain.<sup>31</sup>

The twelve years or so following the introduction of the first code in 1860 were extremely important both for Scottish education and for the Church. Laurie was at the centre of all dealings between the Church of Scotland and the state and it is clear that he became an important figure on the Scottish educational scene during this period. It would obviously be impossible to identify or isolate his personal influence on events and, in any case, although the Church of Scotland's was one of the most powerful voices in the debate, and although they may have helped to ensure the establishment of the Argyll Commission and may have had an effect on the pace at which change was introduced, the impression given is that the Church, and Laurie himself, fought a long, possibly honourable, but ultimately unavailing, campaign to preserve as much of the status quo as possible.

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, January 1871

<sup>31</sup> ECCS, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1872, CH1/43/3, NAS

### The Codes of 1873

The creation of the Scotch Education Department and the Board of Education enabled the institution of separate codes for Scotland and the process whereby the first of these, in 1873, came into being is interesting and important. Essentially, the new board took the 1872 English code as their starting point. But they held wide ranging consultations and submitted a lengthy minute, based on the results of these, to the Committee of Council on Education. This process of consultation with the Board of Education had been enshrined in the 1872 Act, clause 5 of which stipulated that, ‘the Board of Education shall submit for the consideration of the Scotch Education Department the conditions according to which, in their opinion, Parliamentary grants may be most advantageously distributed in Scotland’.<sup>32</sup> However, the timing of this process is intriguing. The 1872 Act became law on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1872 and the *Committee of Council on Education Minute Establishing (the first) Code of regulations for Scotland*<sup>33</sup> was published on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1873. On the face of it, therefore, the Board was established, consultation papers under their so-called ‘Heads of Inquiry’ were sent out, replies were received and evaluated and were compared with the Codes for England, the 1873 code having become available on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1873, a draft Scottish code was prepared and remitted to the Committee of Council, which then approved and published it in its final form, all within nine and a half months. Whilst this is not strictly speaking impossible, it does strongly suggest that at least some of the thinking and preparation must have taken place earlier in expectation of the 1872 Act being passed.

Although neither the ‘Heads of Inquiry’ themselves nor any replies to them are now available, the process of consultation, and the list of those consulted, is of considerable interest. In the introduction to their minute, the board say that they, ‘have had the advantage of further conference with several deputations from the committee of parochial schoolmasters, the Free Church educational committee, the Gaelic Schools Society, the Educational Institute, and other associations’ and that they had sent out ‘Heads of Inquiry’ to ‘HM Inspectors of Schools in Scotland, to the heads of the training colleges, to the Educational Institute, and various associations of schoolmasters, to several eminent

---

<sup>32</sup> Public General Acts 1872, Vic 35 & 36, Ch 62, Education (Scotland)

<sup>33</sup> PP 1873 Vol LII, *Scotch Education Department, Minute of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council establishing a code of regulations for Scotland*

schoolmasters, and to other well known authorities in educational questions.’ The board also feels able to claim that, as a result of this process they, ‘are able to report their belief that the proposals which, after mature consideration, they now have the honour to submit, are in accordance with Scottish sentiment and opinion, and are such as would meet with the approval of the country’.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the use of the word ‘further’ in the first sentence hints at previous preparatory consultations having taken place in preparation for expected devolution of the code to Scotland. Be that as it may, there are two striking omissions from the list of those consulted. Neither the Church of Scotland nor Laurie himself is mentioned. This seems extraordinary since the Church was closely involved in all the developments which took place leading up to the 1872 Act, whether or not they actually influenced it, and Laurie as an individual was secretary to the education committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and secretary and visitor to the Dick bequest trust and had been invited to give evidence to the Argyll Commission in his own right. It is possible that this was deliberately designed to emphasise the fact that after the passing of the 1872 Act no Church should have a privileged position, though this would not explain why the Free Church educational committee was mentioned. Clearly, Laurie himself may have been included as one of the ‘other well known authorities in educational questions’; indeed, it seems very likely that he will have been. Nevertheless, the fact remains that neither he nor the Church is individually credited. In addition, there is only one mention of either the process or of the code itself in the Church education committee minutes which record that, ‘The Secretary made a brief statement of the provisions of the Scotch Code.’<sup>35</sup> Given that the committee’s involvement with, and reaction to, the codes of the 1860s and to proposed legislation in the same period is so fully documented, it seems reasonable to conclude that, had they been similarly involved in the preparation of the 1873 code, then that too would have been recorded. It does not seem to have been. Nor is it likely that discussions were recorded and subsequently lost because the minutes of the education committee were kept in a single minute book, which covers the period 1867 to 1876 and which does not appear to have any gaps in it. The obvious conclusion, remarkable as it may seem, is the Church of Scotland, and Laurie as its committee secretary, were indeed not consulted by the Board of Education in Scotland as part of their preparation of a draft code. Whether or not Laurie

---

<sup>34</sup> PP 1873 Vol LII, *Scotch Education Department, Minute of the Board of Education for Scotland submitting draft articles of a code for that country*, 3

<sup>35</sup> ECCS, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1873, CH1/43/3, NAS

was consulted directly as part of the process which led to the 1873 code, it will be worth considering some of its main provisions, particularly where they differed from those laid down in England, in the light of his views as they are known to have been at the time and subsequently. This is because the 1873 code was fundamental to the future development of Scottish education and because Laurie was most certainly closely involved with that.

### The Code

The 1873 code was very closely based on the English versions of 1872 and 1873, but the differences were extremely significant. The first and, arguably, the most important, variation between the codes north and south of the border was in fact enshrined in the 1872 Act. Article 3(a) in the English version reads, ‘The object of the grant is to aid local exertion, under certain conditions, to maintain Elementary Schools for children.’<sup>36</sup> The Scottish version omits the word ‘Elementary’ and article 6(c) in the Scottish code states that, ‘The education given must consist *chiefly* of elementary instruction.’<sup>37</sup> It was this article which enabled the continued funding of elementary schools in Scotland which also taught higher subjects, thus preserving at least the possibility of progression from the so-called ‘elementary’ school to the university, and it should be considered in conjunction with part of clause 67 of the Act which provided that, ‘due care shall be taken by the Scotch Education Department that the standard of education which now exists in the public schools shall not be lowered.’<sup>38</sup> Laurie himself commented that these words had reference, ‘solely to that kind of instruction which prepared country lads for the Universities. ... and my conviction is that, had that clause not been inserted, the Act would never have been passed.’<sup>39</sup>

If Laurie was, indeed, the author of two articles in *Museum* which appeared under the name ‘Scotus’, then he was drawing attention to the importance of advanced instruction in elementary schools as early as 1862. ‘Scotus’ commenting on the Revised Code wrote,

---

<sup>36</sup> PP 1872 Vol XLVI, *Education 1872 New Code of regulations*

<sup>37</sup> PP 1873 Vol LII, *Scotch Education Department, Minute of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council establishing a code of regulations for Scotland*, 5

<sup>38</sup> Public General Acts 1872, Vic 35 & 36, Ch 62, Education (Scotland) Act

<sup>39</sup> Laurie, ‘Introductory Lecture’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London 1882), 103

‘Those who have watched the working of the Privy Council know well that all its regulations and provisions have had special reference to the circumstances and wants of England, and that the educational peculiarities and claims of Scotland have been contemptuously ignored.’ and, ‘three of the provisions of the Revised Code lately issued – a Code whose objects and principles I approve, in the main, in spite of all that has been said against it – will themselves exemplify the kind of legislation of which I, as a Scotchman, complain.’<sup>40</sup> The first of these provisions was that there were to be no claims for grants for children at primary school above the age of 12.

#### Articles 19, 20, 21

Articles 19, 20 and 21 represent the substance of both the English and the Scottish codes as they relate to the curriculum and to incentives to schoolmasters and mistresses to deliver it in a particular way and it is in these articles that the most significant differences are to be found.

Article 19a provides for the payment of ‘6s per scholar, according to the average number in attendance throughout the year.’<sup>41</sup> But in Scotland part of this sum is made dependent on the inspector’s report on the discipline in the school. This would seem to be a direct consequence of the draft prepared by the board in which they state that they have the objective of preventing, ‘merely mediocre schools from obtaining grants equal to those earned by really efficient and superior schools’.<sup>42</sup>

Article 19B (2) provides for further payments dependent on performance in reading, writing and arithmetic and is the same in the English and Scottish codes. However, crucially, the Scottish code contains an article 19C which the English one does not. This provides for payments for passes in Standards II and III and further payments for performance in standards IV –VI in history and geography. Taken as whole, therefore, this article introduced payment by results and also addressed the requirement laid down in

---

<sup>40</sup> *Museum* Vol 1, January 1862, (Edinburgh), 491

<sup>41</sup> PP 1872 Vol XLVI, *Education 1872 New Code of regulations*, 8

<sup>42</sup> PP 1873 Vol LII, *Scotch Education Department, Minute of the Board of Education for Scotland submitting draft articles of a code for that country*, 4

clause 67 of the 1872 Act to preserve advanced teaching in the elementary schools. This article would also seem to be a direct result of the minute from the board, in which they make it clear that they are committed to the principle of at least some non-elementary work being taught in at least some public schools. However, the board recognised that this presented a problem. They did not wish to make it an absolute condition of being able to claim a grant of 15s per scholar that ‘specific’ or ‘higher’ subjects should be taught; to have done this would have been to penalise some good and efficient schools for which this had never been the tradition. On the other hand, in their own words:

If it were possible, by efficient teaching of the standards, for a school to earn 15s per head on its scholars, and if it were rendered impossible for any school to earn a higher rate of grant, - then it would follow that there would be no inducement for any school to include ‘specific’ or ‘higher’ subjects in its time-table.<sup>43</sup>

Their solution to this was simply to suggest leaving the grant at 15s per scholar where no specific subjects were taught but raising it to 20s per scholar where two or more ‘specific subjects of secular education’ were regularly taught. This, in part, addresses the earlier concerns of the Church of Scotland about the Revised Code itself.

The minute from the board also contains detailed recommendations on ‘specific subjects’. Geography, history, and grammar were effectively moved from the list and included under their proposed standards. This was accepted and provides another significant difference from the English version. The list of ‘specific subjects’ comprises: mathematics (including algebra and geometry), English literature and language, Latin, French, German, and Greek, because, in the view of the board, these provide, ‘more definite mental training.’ The minute from the board makes no specific mention of the omitted subjects, with one, possibly significant, exception. They expressly state that, ‘It has been represented to them that sound elementary teaching in Natural Philosophy, particularly, can hardly be expected in public schools, and that harm is apt to be done by unsound elementary instruction in such a subject.’<sup>44</sup> This is a statement which could have come directly from Laurie himself. His views on the teaching of science remained consistent throughout his life and as early as 1865 he made it clear that he did not believe that science was an appropriate subject for

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 7

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 8

elementary schools. It is important to recognise what Laurie means here by ‘science’. He does not mean the rote learning of scientific ‘facts’, the extension of ‘nature study’. He means us to understand science as an intellectual discipline and he writes, ‘Where Natural Philosophy is that instrument, the method which looks so well in theory must degenerate in actual practice into the most ordinary and vulgar *cram*. Differences, generalisations, laws and causes will not be truly apprehended *as such*. [Laurie’s italics]’<sup>45</sup> It is the cramming which Laurie deplors as not being ‘education’ and it is the apprehension of differences and generalisations which Laurie believes to be beyond the capacity of the younger children. He re-iterated these views even more bluntly in 1881 when he wrote that, ‘There is no science possible for children of nine or ten years of age.’<sup>46</sup> He repeated this in 1891 when he said, ‘I doubt if it (school science) can give true mental discipline before the age of sixteen or seventeen.’<sup>47</sup> Obviously these views were not available to the board in 1873 but his 1865 Dick bequest report was and, if he was consulted, it is highly likely that he would have presented his ideas in their later, trenchant, form. It is interesting to note that the board’s recommendations were made against the background of a rising interest in the teaching of science. In 1864, John Gordon, an Inspector, reported in his evidence to the Argyll Commission that:

The unaided burgh schools are mainly for children of the middle and higher classes; and the instruction they offer is more than elementary, showing occasionally a considerable progress in languages, mathematics, and physical science. They exemplify what has been elsewhere termed the ‘superior primary school.’<sup>48</sup>

And by the time the commission’s report was published in 1867 it recorded that, ‘Science has not got a great hold on the schools but there are indications of its probable increase.’<sup>49</sup> It cannot be shown at this distance that it was Laurie, or Laurie alone, who persuaded the board to omit science from the list of ‘specific subjects’ but it remains possible that his was, at the very least, a powerful voice in this direction. If this is indeed the case then it might be

---

<sup>45</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865) 136

<sup>46</sup> Laurie, ‘On the Educational Wants of Scotland’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London 1882), 288

<sup>47</sup> Laurie, ‘The Curriculum of Secondary Schools’, *Teachers’ Guild Addresses*, (London, 1892), 43

<sup>48</sup> PP 1865 Vol XVII, *Education Commission (Scotland) First report by Her Majesty’s commissioners*, 14

<sup>49</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Education Commission (Scotland), Third report by Her Majesty’s commissioners*, 20

argued that one of Laurie's contributions to the development of the curriculum as taught in Scottish elementary schools was actually to impede the introduction of science teaching on a wider scale. It cannot be stated confidently that he was responsible for any of the provisions in the new Scottish code. It cannot even be stated with absolute confidence that he was part of the consultation process, though it is extremely likely that he was. It can, however, be stated that he was a significant figure in the arguments which led up to the passing of the 1872 Act, albeit one who was usually on the side of preservation of the status quo rather than of 'progress'.



## Chapter XI - Curriculum 1873-1904

### Developments between 1873 and 1890

The Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 and the code of 1873 effectively established a separate and distinctive national system of education for Scotland for the first time. Payment by results was formally introduced. The denominational aspects of elementary education were removed with the placing of responsibility for elementary schools with school boards instead of the churches and a board of education for Scotland was established, albeit on a temporary basis. However, although the Act nominally sought to preserve the teaching of higher subjects in at least some elementary schools, it also made it clear that, ‘burgh schools existing at the passing of the Act, in which the education given does not consist chiefly of elementary instruction ... shall be deemed to be higher class public schools.’<sup>1</sup> And, ‘The funds and revenues of such schools shall consist of, - 1. Contributions payable from the common good ... 2. Endowments ... 3. Fees paid by scholars.’<sup>2</sup> Significantly, higher class public schools were not at this stage permitted to draw on rates for their funding. The effect of this was to ensure that no parliamentary grants would be made for secondary education. This was to depend principally on endowments and on fees but the distribution both of population and of educational endowments across Scotland was very uneven, which meant that the creation of a complete secondary system faced considerably difficulties. Concerns about this led to the establishment of the Colebrooke Commission and, subsequently, to the creation of the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education (APSE), with Laurie as secretary to both bodies.

At almost exactly the same time as APSE was established, Laurie was appointed to the first chair of education at Edinburgh University. This gave Laurie a useful public profile, which he did not hesitate to use. Indeed, it was his habit to give a public introductory lecture at the beginning of each university session and these were then published in the *Educational*

---

<sup>1</sup> Public General Acts 35 & 36 Vict., Ch 62 Education (Scotland) Act, Clause 62

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

*News*. No doubt it was also his status as a professor which helped to secure him invitations to address the Educational Institute and the Social Science Congress on several occasions. All of this will have ensured that Laurie's voice was heard and that he will have contributed to the climate of opinion and hence to the way in which education actually developed in Scotland during this period.

#### Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education

When APSE was founded in 1876, the newly established *Educational News* founded in the same year, as the official organ of the Educational Institute of Scotland, welcomed its formation. The editor wrote:

The formation of the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education in Scotland is an important fact in our educational history and the influence of this Association is materially increased by the character of its membership and the scope of its programme. When we find Whigs like Sir T E Colebrooke, and Tories like Sir W Stirling-Maxwell; Churchmen like Principal Tulloch, and Dissenters, like Professor Calderwood; veteran reformers, like Professor Blackie, and rising reformers, like Professor Ramsay; nobles, principals, professors, divines, lawyers and schoolmasters, agreeing together, not merely on the general drift of a reform, but on the main lines along which reform must be prosecuted, it is plain we are approaching a grave educational crisis.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly there was widespread dissatisfaction with the existing system with regard to secondary education and at the AGM the Earl of Elgin stated that, 'The aim of the Association would not be accomplished until there was within reach of every home a place where secondary education could be got, whether in the elementary schools or in schools devoted to that purpose.' The final phrase of that statement goes to the heart of the debate. This is a clear acknowledgement that, at that time, the members of APSE did not necessarily envisage a division between elementary and secondary schools. Their concern was simply to ensure that the schools as they existed would provide all pupils with at least the potential to take their education beyond the purely elementary stage. To that end, the association sought to remedy the deficiencies in the existing system, as they saw them, by, 'pressing on the Education Department the importance of making such regulations in the "Scotch Code" as will promote the higher instruction in public schools'.<sup>4</sup> This is very much

---

<sup>3</sup> *Educational News*, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1876

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

in line with what Laurie argued for throughout his life. The key to understanding Laurie's approach to this issue lies in his understanding of what constituted a 'higher subject'. He was firmly of the view that the concept itself was flawed, believing rather that:

There is no such thing as a primary subject and no such thing as a higher subject. Every subject has its beginning, its middle and its end; and the extent, and time, and mode of teaching it is a question of the pupil's age and stage of advancement, and that is all. And if this be so, there cannot be, in any country, a consistent and steady line of demarcation between primary and secondary school and the primary and secondary teacher, except perhaps where both kinds of school exist in the same locality.<sup>5</sup>

With this in mind, it becomes clear that the issue of higher subjects in elementary schools is a practical, and not a philosophical one. First the basics should be provided and then each child should be taken as far as he or she can go, within whatever situation they find themselves. This approach cleared the way for Laurie to be a strong supporter of the teaching of higher subjects in parochial schools and, at the same time, a strong supporter of the development of burgh schools, or higher class public schools, within the centres of population and he would have seen no conflict between these two ideas. He was quite happy to concede that, where there was a sufficient density of population, it made practical sense to establish secondary or high schools, which would be able, because of the concentration of pupils, to provide better instruction in advanced subjects and that at a certain point in the career of a boy from a rural area it would make sense for him to travel to a population centre for the purpose of obtaining secondary education. 'By all means let promising lads be drafted into high schools before proceeding to the University; but inasmuch as this drafting is, generally speaking, impracticable before a boy is about fifteen years of age, it is urged that up to this age the country school should give him his preparation.'<sup>6</sup> In his evidence to the Moncrieff Commission Laurie went even further on this issue. 'I should like also to premise that wherever a high school exists, or can be created, the organisation of the elementary schools under the board should be so adapted as not to carry the children beyond a certain point in those particular schools, but to fit them rather for entering the high schools.'<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Laurie, 'Higher Subjects in primary or Elementary Schools', delivered to EIS Congress 1879, *The Training of Teachers*, (London 1882), 155

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> PP 1881 Vol XXXVI, *Report by the Commissioners on Endowed Schools in Scotland*, 1

With the philosophical issues settled to his satisfaction, the remaining questions about the way forward therefore became purely practical. In his usual fashion, Laurie considered these in some detail and he set out his proposals in an address to the social science meeting in Aberdeen in 1879 (see ch. IX). Whilst the principal aim of APSE was to promote the teaching of higher subjects, it identified three subordinate aims which it believed would have to be pursued if the major goal was to be achieved. The first of these, which has been considered in chapter IX, was the reform of endowments; the second was, as they saw it, the need for greater Scottish control of education in Scotland; and the third was the putting in place of codes which would, unlike that of 1873, properly encourage the teaching of higher subjects.

### ‘Devolution’

Although the passing of the 1872 Act represented a major step in the process of the ‘devolution’ of education to Scottish control, the Scotch Education Department was still based in London and cannot be said to have had genuine independence from the Committee of Council on Education. In addition, the Board of Education, created specifically to oversee the changes set in motion by the 1872 Act was a temporary body. Although clearly a step in the right direction, these changes did not altogether satisfy Scottish opinion. The perceived problem created by having control of Scottish education from London was not new. As early as 1864 the minutes of the education committee of the Church of Scotland record that they, ‘Read Draft Memorial to the House of Commons regarding certain modifications of the Revised Code. Approved with addition on the subject of the unsuitableness of English legislation for Scotch Schools, which the Convener and Secretary were authorised to make.’<sup>8</sup> And the second report of the Argyll Commission stated that, ‘one of the misfortunes which has befallen this country is that no distinction has been made by the Committee of Council in dealing with the schools of England and Scotland.’<sup>9</sup> It can also not have helped the Scottish feeling of being subsumed under unsuitable English educational provision when, in response to concerns about the impact of the English Education Act of 1870, the vice president of the Privy Council was understood to say that

---

<sup>8</sup> ECCS, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1864, CH1/43/2, NAS

<sup>9</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland) Second Report of Her Majesty’s Commissioners*, cxlvii

the English Act was 'Imperial in character' and therefore its sentiments should affect Scotland as well.<sup>10</sup>

Laurie, as secretary to ECCS, would have had a part to play in their representations but he was also active in this regard on his own account. He clearly felt that this was a very important issue as is illustrated early on in his first introductory lecture as professor in 1876. 'It is impossible for us to have State control of our education system which will be satisfactory to the country, until we have its centre of activity transferred from London to Edinburgh.'<sup>11</sup> The members of APSE also believed that 'devolution' had not gone far enough. Accordingly, they stated in a memorial to the Duke of Richmond that:

Your Memorialists are fully persuaded that in order to attain these important ends, and to secure the successful working of the Education (Scotland) Act, it is indispensably necessary that the supervision of the Public Schools of Scotland shall be vested in a body of men qualified for the duty by their knowledge and experience, and their sympathy with the feelings, interests, and habits of the Scottish people; located in Scotland.<sup>12</sup>

Again, as secretary, Laurie was strongly associated with these sentiments and he was included amongst the 350 signatories of the memorial.

After five years of the operation of a Scotch education department in London and a board of education in Edinburgh, the board was due to be discontinued and at that point the Privy Council received representations from, amongst others, the Established Church and APSE petitioning against its abolition. The Church of Scotland education committee resolved that, 'because the existing Board of Education for Scotland expires, it would be desirable to set up a successor Board with a permanent Headquarters in Scotland. Motion approved and to be notified to the Lord Advocate.'<sup>13</sup> The records of APSE representations show that a deputation went from Scotland on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1877 to meet representatives of the government in order to press the case in favour of continuing the Board of Education in Scotland. The deputation consisted of, '50 people representing the Universities, EIS,

---

<sup>10</sup> ECCS, January 1871, CH1/43/3, NAS

<sup>11</sup> Laurie, 'Introductory Lecture 1876-77', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 92

<sup>12</sup> 'Memorial to the Duke of Richmond', papers of the Duke of Buccleuch, GD/224/810/8, NAS

<sup>13</sup> ECCS, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1877, CH1/43/4, NAS

Town Councils, School Boards, Public Meetings, Free Church, United Presbyterian Church etc.’<sup>14</sup> Curiously, neither the Church of Scotland nor Laurie himself is mentioned in this minute, although presumably Laurie, as secretary, would have had a hand in organising the deputation and in preparing their submission.

In spite of all this activity, the board was allowed to lapse in 1878, although another royal commission, under Moncreiff, was established to look into endowments and the funding of secondary education again, this time with greater powers than Colebrooke had had. During this period, therefore, there was strong support for more Scottish control of Scottish education. Laurie was very much part of this movement and, because of the offices he held, his will have been an important voice. However, given the composition of APSE and the wide range of people and organisations who contributed to the debate, it would surely be an overstatement to suggest that Laurie's contribution to the debate was a determining one but it was significant.

### Codes

Although there was a great deal of debate about the use of endowments and about decentralisation during this period, both these issues were essentially means to an end. The real question was about secondary education. The Scottish tradition had always been that boys of ability, even in the most rural of areas, could receive instruction in the ‘university subjects’ at their parish elementary school which would take them to the point where they would be able to go on to the university itself. There has, of course, been debate about the extent to which this actually happened in practice and, if it did, about the extent to which the majority of children in the schools were neglected in order to make it possible. Robert Lowe was sceptical in this regard and his Revised Code sought to provide incentives to teachers to concentrate first and foremost on the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and there were many who thought that the effects of the code were beneficial. For example, HMI J MacLeod, wrote in his Report on 1875-76, ‘The standard system introduced into our common schools in 1862 has done incalculable good to the education of the working

---

<sup>14</sup> ‘Members of Deputation to the Duke of Richmond and Gordon’, papers of the Duke of Buccleuch, GD/224/810/8, NAS

classes.’<sup>15</sup> adding that, prior to the introduction of the code, ‘the education of the masses was totally neglected’ and, ‘The prevailing opinion both in Scotland and beyond it, regarding the education which was provided in our parish schools, was very erroneous.’<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the report from the Board of Education for Scotland to the Lords of the Privy Council, in the same year, states that:

It was one of the chief features of the old parochial school system of Scotland, that pupils were instructed in the higher branches of education, and were generally so well grounded in these branches that they were qualified to pass from the parochial school to the University. But for some years past the scholars sent up from country schools have by no means exhibited the same proficiency as in former times.<sup>17</sup>

HMI R Ogilvie sums it up thus:

The Revised Code has effected a radical improvement throughout the country in the elementary subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic. ... But on the whole the higher subjects have kept on a struggling existence since the Revised Code came into force. ... The Revised Code neither prescribed nor proscribed the higher subjects, and it has certainly laid the best possible foundation for their acquirement. They have fallen off simply because they have not been sufficiently encouraged and stimulated.<sup>18</sup>

The Scotch Code of 1873 might, perhaps, have been expected to address the concerns about higher subjects and in theory Article 21 did provide a step towards doing so. However, the situation remained unsatisfactory. The Board of Education itself was critical of the Education Act, saying:

[It] cannot be called satisfactory. Out of 2329 schools as many as 989 remain unaffected by the inducements held out in Article 21 of the Educational Code and teach none of the ‘specific’ or higher subjects. There must, therefore, be a vast number of districts in which children of the poorer classes have no opportunity of getting the rudiments of higher cultivation.<sup>19</sup>

And further that the reason for the absence of higher instruction in many elementary schools was, ‘Simply the operation of a very shrewd calculation on the part of the teacher

---

<sup>15</sup> PP 1876, Vol XXV, *Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland*, 136

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, xxvii

<sup>18</sup> PP 1874 Vol XX, *Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland*, 21

<sup>19</sup> PP 1876, Vol XXV, *Third annual report of the Board of Education for Scotland*, xxiii

(the school board concurring with him) that it would “pay better” to stick to ordinary work under the standards, instead of trying for grants under Article 21.’<sup>20</sup>

APSE also had reservations about the way in which the Scotch Code operated in practice and the executive committee sent a memorial, dated 9<sup>th</sup> April 1877, to the Duke of Richmond, then Lord President of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, stating that they, ‘desire to point to the fact that the remuneration offered in the Code for the different classes of subjects is not arranged on a scale to encourage scholars to qualify themselves for the various professional studies in the Universities.’<sup>21</sup> Consideration of the list of members of the association quickly shows that it could call on very significant political and educational experience and on access to the very highest levels of power. Such people would not have needed Laurie to ‘open doors’ in the corridors of power. On the other hand, as a respected educationalist and as secretary it is likely that the association would have leaned heavily on his professional advice. This view is supported by the minutes of the AGM in 1876 which record that:

Professor Laurie communicated a paper on ‘The present supply of Secondary Instruction in Scotland, and the way of supplying existing needs’. He proposed that secondary education should be encouraged by a system of grants from local efforts, from existing endowments, and from the Treasury.<sup>22</sup>

There is no record of that paper lodged with the records of the Association. However, Laurie did read a paper to the Social Science meeting in Aberdeen in 1879 entitled ‘Secondary Education in Scotland’ and it is reasonable to assume that the main thrust of that paper will have been the same as of the one he delivered in 1876. Indeed, it may have been identical. When the paper read in Aberdeen in 1879 was printed in a collected edition of Laurie's lectures and articles in 1882 it contained several footnotes, including, ‘This power is now given by the Act of 1878’ and ends with the note, ‘Since the above was

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> ‘Memorial to the Duke of Richmond’, papers of the Duke of Buccleuch, GD/224/810/8, NAS

<sup>22</sup> Ibid



written many of the objects of the Association have been gained; but much still remains to be done.’<sup>23</sup> This strongly suggests that Laurie was repeating something he had already said.

Characteristically, Laurie believed that he had the answer to the problems which the detail of the 1873 code had failed to answer. He expressed these in his introductory lecture as professor in 1876, in his evidence to the Moncreiff Commission and in the paper read to the Social Science Congress in 1879. Laurie identified the central problem as being the way in which the teaching of higher subjects was to be encouraged and remunerated and he dealt with it with withering sarcasm. Referring to the attempt to preserve the teaching of higher subjects made through clause 67 of the 1872 Act, he says:

Faith has not been kept with us. For how has the provision been given effect to? By informing teachers that after giving an hour’s steady daily work where there is one class (and about two hours where there are two or more classes) to the instruction of a few promising boys and girls who take Latin and Mathematics, they will be rewarded at the end of the year with 4s per subject for each boy!<sup>24</sup>

He then goes on to point out the, to him, absurdity of valuing the work of a school only in terms of those things which can be measured. ‘If intelligence is worth 2s a head, what price are we to pay for morality?’ and ‘a sensitive conscience generally at 4s, would go quite well into a statistical table, and admit of summation.’<sup>25</sup>

The problem which Laurie identifies for the rural schools is that there will never be more than a very small number of pupils taking these special subjects at any one time, pointing out that:

It is a more exhausting process to teach two boys Latin than to teach ten, and if a master has, owing to local circumstances, only two pupils, it is not unreasonable to ask that he should be rewarded just as if he had ten, by a fixed Parliamentary Grant.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore any system of payment which is based on a per capita annual amount is unrealistic. And he is in no doubt where to place the blame. ‘We must put the saddle on the

---

<sup>23</sup> Laurie, ‘Secondary Education in Scotland’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 199

<sup>24</sup> Laurie, ‘Introductory Lecture 1876-77’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London 1882), 103

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 108-109

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 116

right horse, then, and that horse is not the Act, but the Scotch Education Department. The temporary Board appointed to conserve Scottish interests found that its powers of Code-drafting ceased with its first efforts in that direction.' Laurie is happy to acknowledge that the code had its merits, particularly with regard to the education of the majority. 'It is our duty to acknowledge that the Code has great merits, and that in many respects it has been of signal benefit to education in Scotland. We must bear in mind that a Code for public elementary schools must be constructed primarily for the benefit of the many not the few.' Nevertheless, he believed that it was not in the interests of higher education. 'Its influence on that kind of instruction which prepares boys for the Universities is wholly bad.' The root cause of the problem, in Laurie's view, was not the issue of what might be termed 'payment for performance'. He was always happy with the idea that better schools and better schoolmasters should earn more. Indeed he states this explicitly when he says:

Having once settled the standards and the school classification, and compelled attention to the mechanical arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic, it (the Code) should then, I hold, try, through its officials, to go right to the heart and mind of a school. It can only do this by taking a class, not an individual, as the school unit; and if the mind of that class satisfies the Inspector it should be passed as a whole. This does not, of course, mean that every boy is not to be examined.<sup>27</sup>

Laurie's idea that classes should be assessed as a whole was also designed to address a second problem. As he put it, 'The duller pupils have to be brought up to a minimum standard, and energies have to be wasted on them which would be much more profitably employed in the cultivation of the mind of the school.' and in the same article, 'The true objection to the Code is that its money payments are so ordered that the teacher shall spend his energies on the dunces and laggards of the school in the teeth of nature and of providence.'<sup>28</sup> He therefore argued strenuously and consistently for a modification in the way in which the principles were applied. With his usual pragmatism, Laurie realised that in any class there would be some who would simply never pass. Efforts should, of course, be made to teach them, but not at the expense of everyone else. Furthermore, neither the teacher nor the school should be judged on the performance of this minority. It should be

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 104, 109

<sup>28</sup> Laurie, 'Theory, History and Art of Education', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 110, 114

possible to assess whether or not the teacher, and the school, were 'good' on a whole-class basis.

Laurie later refined his views on how this should be achieved, putting forward his ideas on how to deal with the elementary subjects in a paper read to the Ayrshire branch of the EIS and published in *Educational News* in 1883.<sup>29</sup> He proposed that every pupil should be examined in these and the full per capita payment should be allowed provided that, say, 80% of the pupils reached the required standard. He dealt with the higher subjects in his evidence to the Moncreiff Commission by putting forward a suggestion which clearly had its roots in his work with the Dick bequest. He reiterated that the problem stemmed mainly from the fact that many schools had too few pupils taking higher subjects to make it financially worth the teacher's while on a per capita basis. Therefore, 'the only way of doing it is by *making a grant to the teacher himself* as a teacher of higher subjects'.<sup>30</sup>

A large part of the problem, in Laurie's view, was that educational provision had been allowed to evolve piecemeal in the twenty or so years following the introduction of the Revised Code. In an anonymous article in *Fraser's Magazine* in August 1880 he wrote, 'round the dry and meagre Code introduced by Mr Lowe in 1861, there has grown, by inevitable accretion, the list of "specific subjects" which now call forth so much adverse comment.'<sup>31</sup> This appeared under the name 'An Old Educationalist' and it is not entirely clear why Laurie should have chosen not to acknowledge it at this stage. By 1882, he was evidently happy to do so since he included it in *The Training of Teachers and other Educational papers*. The article does not contain any opinions or ideas which Laurie did not also state elsewhere. However, it may have been because in this instance Laurie was stepping directly into the political arena in that he was commenting on a debate in the House of Lords and he may not have wished to be seen to associate himself with one group of the other at that particular time. Whatever the reason, the article and its subsequent reprinting will have had some effect. It is also worth noting the context of the debate since

---

<sup>29</sup> *Educational News*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1883

<sup>30</sup> PP 1881, Vol XXXVI, *Report by the Commissioners on Endowed Institutions in Scotland*, 8

<sup>31</sup> Laurie, 'The House of Lords and Popular Education', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 126

it encapsulates, again, one of the key differences in outlook with regard to elementary education north and south of the border. The debate was prompted by a motion introduced by Lord Norton, ‘That a humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that Her Majesty would be graciously pleased to direct that the Fourth Schedule be omitted from the New Code of Regulations issued by the Committee of Privy Council on Education.’ This motion was supported by those who believed that the presence of anything beyond the most elementary instruction was, as Laurie put it, ‘in the opinion of the House of Lords not necessary to the child of the working man – nay, more, in their general effect and social tendency, are positively hurtful.’ This contrasts with Laurie's own, Scottish, view that, ‘it is the duty of the State in its own interest to see that all its citizens have at least an opportunity afforded them of being educated, not only up to the level of their existing position in the social scale, but up to the level of their possible position.’ Lord Norton and his supporters felt, moreover, that the presence of more advanced instruction in elementary schools was the reason for some pupils emerging from the schools with little ability to read with expression or comprehension. Robert Lowe himself, by now ennobled as Lord Sherbrooke, is quoted as having come across boys who have passed the Sixth Standard but who could not, ‘act as his private readers in such a way as to make listening on his part either pleasing or profitable.’ Not surprisingly, his solution to this is to go ‘back to the basics’ of the Revised Code he himself had introduced in 1861. Laurie, by contrast, argues that it is the code which is to blame. ‘Mr Lowe instructs boys in the deciphering of printed characters, and then complains that when all is over they cannot read to him satisfactorily blue-books or the “Fortnightly”. Why should they?’<sup>32</sup>

Laurie therefore continued to believe that the code was a limiting factor and that there was much to be done before Scotland could be said to have a satisfactory system. He summed up this view in his introductory lecture in 1881, which he titled *The Educational Wants of Scotland*, when he said, ‘The Education Code then, even as revised, is not yet an Educational Code; nor can it become this till the ... class subjects ... are thrown into the ordinary standard work, and the whole scheme of elementary education elaborated into a unity.’<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 121 - 129

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 292

The passing of two Acts of Parliament in 1878 Act created the Moncreiff Commission, which could authorise schemes for reform of endowed institutions, something which Colebrooke had not had the power to do, though not actually instigate reform, and enabled school boards to use rate income to maintain and build higher class schools, though not to use such income either to reduce fees or to pay salaries. Although these were modest advances in terms of the provision of higher education, they were seen as successes for APSE which disbanded itself shortly afterwards because its members felt that their point had been made and that secondary education had been put in a position where it could be expected to develop further.

However, Laurie himself did not stop trying to achieve his aims in remedying the defects of the system as he saw them. In 1883 he took it upon himself to publish his own version of what he thought the code should be. This document reiterated all of the points which he had been making since 1876 or so and, though dated March 1883, is included as an appendix in his 1888 book entitled *Occasional Addresses On Educational Subjects*. This 'code' can be compared to the official code of 1882 and, subsequently, to the code of 1886. This will give some indication of the extent to which Laurie differed in his views from the prevailing departmental policy and, perhaps, of the extent to which those views subsequently came to be accepted by the new Scottish Office. The 1882 code was, in its essentials, much the same as it had been for ten years or so with funding depending on individual passes, first in reading, writing and arithmetic and subsequently in selected specific subjects, with the attendant pressure to neglect teaching at higher levels which has been identified. Laurie's code proposed a much more general approach and his solution as far as grants were concerned was simplicity itself. There would be no grants for specific subjects because these would simply become part of the ordinary work of the school. Grants would instead be given on a class basis. Infant departments, where there was no 'payment by results', would continue to be funded as they had been. Grants for all standards would determined on a capitation basis on attendance and a deduction would be made for every failure in reading, writing and arithmetic beyond 20%.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Laurie, 'A Possible Code for Public Elementary Schools', *Occasional Addresses on Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 209

In this way, payment would still be ‘by results’ but would recognise the reality of the situation, in that there would always be some failures and official acceptance of this would prevent teachers from concentrating on the very weakest to the detriment of the rest. An increasing scale of grants for the higher standards would ensure that there was an incentive to teach beyond the basics where possible. In addition, Laurie proposed a Dick bequest-style payment to the master personally for teaching beyond standard V1, provided he was qualified to do so. Laurie then appended ‘Instructions to Inspectors’ to his suggested code. These show him as placing a great deal of faith in their abilities and their judgement:

You have studied the principles, methods, and history of education, and have yourself either taught a school of your own, or have been trained to teach in a Normal Practising School during your probationary period. It is not therefore necessary to issue detailed instructions for your guidance.

True to his word, Laurie then sought to ‘set the tone’ for the inspection, rather than to set down detailed subject criteria. He stressed that, ‘The teacher should hail your visit, not fear it.’ He also gave an insight into his attitudes on discipline when he wrote, ‘But you will be careful to exclude from the specially commended class those schools in which there is any indication of over-work, in which play and freedom are not amply provided for, and also those in which the discipline is not mild and just, and does not show itself to be so in the manners and bearing of the children.’<sup>35</sup>

#### Scotch Education Department

The pressure which had been exerted by APSE and others, including Laurie, for greater ‘devolution’ in educational matters bore fruit in 1885 with the appointment of a Secretary for Scotland and Vice-President of the Scotch Education Department and this opened the way to immediate change. The first code to be issued after its formation, dated 1886, went out over the name of ‘Henry Craik, Secretary Scotch Education Department’ and a new era had begun. In fact this new code was almost immediately suspended but the principles were established and the new approach did come into effect in 1887. Grants made for class subjects in standards 111 – V1 were henceforth to be made on the basis of an assessment by

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 209, 210

the inspector on the quality of the teaching, rather than on the basis of the number of individual passes achieved. 'A grant on the examination in class subjects of the children presented in standards 111 – V1 amounting to 1s or 2s for each subject if the inspector report that the teaching is fair (1s) or good (2s). The grant is paid on the average attendance throughout the year of children above seven years of age.'<sup>36</sup> The extent to which this represented a departure from the established custom is shown by the 'Instructions to her Majesty's Inspectors, applicable to the code of 1886' which were issued in the same year. These noted that much of the grant would henceforth be paid not on the basis of examination results but, 'upon the general estimate which the Inspector forms of the efficiency of the instruction'.<sup>37</sup>

These changes went a long way towards the sort of code which Laurie had been advocating and when he included a copy of his 1883 Code in his 1888 collection of educational addresses, he was able to add the comment that, 'When this Code first appeared some experienced educationalists regarded it as "pious imagination" and smiled at my confidence in it. More than half of it is already worked into the Scottish Code. The rest will be substantially adopted in due time.'<sup>38</sup>

Thus, by 1886, Laurie had seen much of what he had worked and argued for come into being. There was, at last, a separate government department running Scottish education, secondary education was recognised in the grants system, the crude 'payment by results' introduced in 1873 after the model established by Robert Lowe had been replaced and now depended on class, rather than individual, assessment in all but the basics, and further changes were on the horizon. No wonder that he said in his introductory lecture in 1886:

For 22 years, I have lectured and written not a little, and in language not always very mild, but none the less judicious, on the Code and its requirements. Most gratifying it was to see that the first act of the Scottish Office was to amend the Code in what I believe to be a sound direction.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> PP 1886 Vol LI, *Code of Regulations*, 8

<sup>37</sup> PP 1886 Vol LI, *Instructions to Her Majesty's Inspectors*, 3

<sup>38</sup> Laurie, 'Appendix', *Occasional Addresses on Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 197

<sup>39</sup> Laurie, 'Introductory Lecture 1886', *Educational News*, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1886

The first code to be issued by the newly created Scottish Office actually came into effect in 1887 and it may be that its introduction marked both the pinnacle and the beginning of the end of Laurie's practical influence on the development of public education in Scotland. Consideration of Laurie's introductory lecture for session 1888-89 along with his address to the EIS Congress in Stirling in January 1889 make clear his approval of much of the new code and his satisfaction in having been part of the pressure which had shaped the new direction of public education. Laurie could say, 'I am far from thinking our Code is yet perfect; but the educational as opposed to the mechanical idea has now been recognised in it. ... This we owe to the Scottish Office and the Permanent Secretary.'<sup>40</sup> At the 1889 Congress Laurie felt able to recount all the things for which he, and others, had argued since the passing of the 1872 Act and the days of APSE, which, he said, had been ridiculed as impossible dreams but which had now come about:

We are told that it is impossible to get what we want. I can recall many impossibilities which are now actualities. We urged in olden times a sub-committee of my Lords for Scotland. The suggestion was greeted with non possumus, nay with laughter; we got it. My own urgency as to the recognition of the principles and psychology of education were met with the sneer of superior knowledge and kindly condescension to a well meaning fanatic. We got it, and we have it embodied in Training College programmes. A Scottish office was a ridiculous impossibility; we got it. It would be disastrous to separate Scottish educational administration from English; we got it. An Act to empower rating for secondary schools was declared an impossibility; we got it in 1878. The giving up of individual examination and individual payments was impossible; we have got it in the lower part of the school. It is ridiculous to talk of impossibilities when the cause is a good one.<sup>41</sup>

Thus Laurie, with good reason, struck a note of some satisfaction with the situation at the end of 1888 and, from the tone of his Stirling address in particular, with his own part in having brought it about.

### Summary

Laurie was not alone in arguing for change during this period and no doubt many of those changes which took effect were the result of a form of natural evolution of the educational system in response to social pressures, such as the increasing tendency for the population to be concentrated in the towns and cities. To that extent, it would be an exaggeration to

---

<sup>40</sup> *Educational News*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1888

<sup>41</sup> *Educational News*, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1889



suggest that Laurie himself brought them about. Nevertheless, his was a particularly consistent and persistent voice. His roles as secretary, to the Dick bequest, to the education committee of the Church of Scotland and, during the 1870s, to the Colebrooke Commission and to APSE, and his position as professor of the theory, history and art of education gave him a unique status and provided his oft-stated views with considerable authority. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that, at this time and in this area at least, Laurie's views were a very significant factor in determining the directions in which education evolved in Scotland. Although, the next decade or so was to see dramatic changes, especially in the introduction and then extension of free education and in the advance of technical instruction in schools, Laurie himself was curiously quiet during this period. The *Educational News* does not report any major speeches by Laurie between 1889 and 1897 and although he published a collected edition of some of his speeches and articles 1901 in a volume entitled *The Training of Teachers* many of these had already published in 1882 in a book with the same title and there is nothing new from the years between 1888 and 1897. It is difficult therefore to avoid the conclusion that Laurie's influence was waning and that the years between the passing of the 1872 Act and the creation of the Scottish Office in 1885 represent the time when his influence was at his height.

#### The Codes of 1899 and 1903

There was, however, to be one last major issue over which Laurie, if he did not actually alter the course of subsequent events, certainly generated a great deal of debate. The arguments centred on the codes of 1899 and 1903 and on what to do with pupils in their final year or two of compulsory education and on the place of 'technical' education in schools. The Technical Schools (Scotland) Act in 1887, as Craik expressed it, aimed, 'to keep the future occupation clearly in view in early education'<sup>42</sup> and thus to make school work more relevant to life after school. However, since the Act made it clear that 'no attendance at a technical school can be reckoned for a grant under the Education Acts',<sup>43</sup> it was not surprising that it did not bring about radical change. It was nevertheless indicative of Craik's thinking on this issue. In Laurie's view, as long as the aim remained to create

---

<sup>42</sup> PP 1888 Vol LXXVIII, Technical Schools (Scotland) Circular from the Scotch Education Department, 2

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 3

technical colleges for a particular section of the population who were, in any case, not suited either by social background or by intellectual capacity, for an advanced liberal education there was no particular problem with their existence. Indeed, in his opening lecture to the education class in 1897 he set out a vision for secondary education which would have encompassed technical and commercial education in board schools. He remained committed to advanced instruction in the university subjects for those who were capable of benefiting from it but in this lecture he appears to take a significant step towards the advocates of a more practical form of education for many asking, 'Is no provision to be made for carrying a certain proportion of these (pupils who have completed the Sixth Standard) forward so as to fit them at the age, say, of fourteen or fifteen for the various occupations which they are then supposed to engage in?' He then went further, again with specific reference to town schools when he said, 'Let the money which might be spent on advanced departments be spent in this direction by increasing the staff, if necessary, and applying such salaries as to secure teachers who are capable of giving training as well as instruction.' As Laurie put it:

There has arisen, owing to the vast development of primary education in this country ... a class of children in the Board schools who will never go to a secondary school, and whom it is not desirable to send to a secondary school, but who need and deserve education beyond the sixth standard ... they want secondary education in the sense of more advanced education; it is the business of our school Boards to provide it. I would call the one kind of education 'professional secondary education' and the other 'industrial education' ... and this industrial secondary education should be free.<sup>44</sup>

In expressing these views he certainly found favour with the *Educational News*. As an editorial put it:

Professor Laurie is once more on the right track. He is now of the opinion that Board Schools should have a distinct secondary curriculum of their own - an industrial curriculum; and he is more liberal in his idea of what should constitute it than some of his past utterances would lead one to expect. Professor Laurie has now joined the ranks of those who believe that Board schools should have an advanced curriculum of its own of an industrial kind, as distinct from the Grammar School studies; and everyone who understands the problem will be of his opinion. The 'dividing line' is doomed.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> *Educational News*, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1897

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

Taken at face value, this could be read as a change of heart by Laurie. However, Laurie had never believed that, after the elementary stage, instruction in the university subjects was suitable for everyone. He simply believed that it must be provided for those capable of benefiting and, in an ethical sense, that it was the 'highest' form of education, that is, the one which would enable those capable of it most fully to 'realise' themselves. Previously, the others could simply have left school but this was not now possible and the pressure of increased numbers completing the primary stage had to an extent put advanced liberal education under threat. It was not possible economically to provide 'professional' secondary education for everyone so one way to preserve it for the most able section of the pupil body would be to divert the others into 'technical education'.

With this as a background, the code of 1899 pleased Laurie considerably. This code differed significantly from its predecessors. For the first time it formally recognised advanced departments in public schools for children who had achieved the merit certificate. The subjects required to gain the merit certificate were to be reading, writing and arithmetic, together with nature knowledge, English, geography and history. The curriculum which a school proposed to offer in the advanced department, where there was one, had to be submitted to the department for approval and had to make provision for instruction in English, history, geography, arithmetic and subjects chosen from: languages, mathematics and science. The curriculum laid down for the higher grade schools 'of whatever kind' consisted of English, history, geography, higher arithmetic, and drawing. Those following the higher grade science course were to study, in addition, mathematics, experimental science and, as a rule, some form of manual work. Those on the higher grade commercial course were to take one or more modern languages, book keeping, shorthand, and knowledge of commercial products. Thus there was the possibility of scientific or commercial instruction, by transfer of school, without its imposition on all. There was also the possibility of continued instruction at the rural public schools in the more traditional subjects.<sup>46</sup>

Not surprisingly, Laurie welcomed this code in his introductory lecture in 1899. Whilst this lecture does not appear in full either in Laurie's own collected works or in the *Educational*

---

<sup>46</sup> PP 1899 Vol LXXVI, *Scotch Education Department 1899 Code of Regulations*, 4

*News*, that paper did report on it. Laurie is reported as having said that, 'the Code was humanistic, and went right in the teeth of attempts to turn our schools into ante-chambers of alkali works and engineering shops. It was a liberal education founded in the proper signification of the word.' He also said that, 'There were, in his opinion, no defects in the Code itself.'<sup>47</sup> However, Laurie's satisfaction with the state of affairs was not to last for very long. In his view, much of what had been achieved with the introduction of the 1899 code was lost when the 1903 version appeared. Writing as the, by then emeritus, professor of the institutes of education, in an article entitled 'The Code in 1903 and Freedom in Education' Laurie first looked back on the 1899 version and his approval of that is made clear:

Two or three years ago very important improvements were made in the Code ... The most vital of these ... encouraged the formation of Advanced Departments in Public Schools ... as the new regulation was accompanied by freedom in the construction of an advanced curriculum (subject to the general approval of the Department) it enabled every parish to secure the kind of instruction most suited to its needs.<sup>48</sup>

This, he thought, cleared the way for the continuation of the teaching of 'university subjects', and hence of a liberal education, in the final years of schooling for those who passed the merit certificate at age 12 or so but were destined to remain in the elementary school until leaving at age 14. The problem of what to do with these pupils had always existed to some extent but it was severely exacerbated by the passing of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1901. This Act abolished the provisions which had previously allowed some pupils to leave early thus greatly increasing the numbers involved between the ages of 12 and 14 and throwing their needs into sharp focus. The department's solution was, for the first time, to draw a clear distinction between elementary and secondary education. Those capable of benefiting from secondary education would henceforth transfer at the age of twelve to a school properly set up for that purpose but provision needed to be made for the rest. To fill this gap, the Code of 1903 introduced 'supplementary courses'. Crucially from Laurie's point of view, these courses were to be prescribed and were to be elementary and practical and the 'merit certificate' was to be earned at the end of them. As Laurie understood the code, pupils were to study English and one of: the commercial course, the

---

<sup>47</sup> *Educational News*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1899

<sup>48</sup> *Educational News*, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1903

industrial course, the rural course, or the household management course. There would be no room in the timetable for languages or mathematics. As he saw it, this plan would mark the end of the provision of advanced instruction in the rural parish schools, the end of exactly the type of education towards which Laurie had devoted most of his energies throughout his working life. Although he made a public condemnation of the code in an address to an educational conference in Edinburgh in June of 1903, his first response was in the form of a report to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May of that year. It is interesting that a copy this report is to be found in the correspondence file of the Scotch Education Department. There is also an appended note titled 'Remarks on the 1903 Code by Professor Laurie', with comments handwritten in pencil by Henry Craik himself in the margin.<sup>49</sup>

The essence of the problem, as Laurie saw it, was that in small rural schools constraints of time and resources would render impossible the continuation of the sort of liberal education he believed in:

When reference is made to ch IX which deals specially with 'Higher Grade departments or Schools', we find that the course to be followed in these must be *either* a Commercial *or* a Science Course (including of course in both cases English, Geography, and Arithmetic). The Science Course demands Experimental Science, which necessitates a laboratory, and the Commercial Course suggests a teacher of Shorthand. [The note in the margin reads simply 'no' but this may have referred only to the perceived need for shorthand teachers. If so, it is hardly a serious rebuttal of Laurie's main point]. The distinguishing and essential note of a 'Higher Grade Department' or 'School' is that it shall provide a three years' curriculum for boys and girls who have gained the Qualifying Certificate. The institution of such schools is possible, accordingly, only in populous centres.

Furthermore:

In populous centres it would seem to be intended that instruction should cease in the case of all those who gain the Qualifying Certificate, (say at twelve and a half years of age), and the pupils be removed to Higher Grade Schools or Schools which have Higher Grade Departments, the incompetents being left behind without the stimulus of cleverer pupils, marking time till they are fourteen, and then being excluded from the Merit Certificate. [Craik's note reads 'absolutely wrong' but probably refers only to the suggestion that pupils remaining behind are excluded from the merit certificate. No doubt they were not technically so excluded but the substance of Laurie's complaint remains unaddressed.]

---

<sup>49</sup> Remarks on The Code of 1903, ED7/1/21, NAS

Laurie pursues the point about the availability of advanced instruction in rural schools:

I cannot but think that an attempt is being made to impose one or other of the 'Supplementary Courses'. This, while depriving Boards and teachers of all independence and initiative granted in previous Codes, would make it practically impossible to carry on instruction after the qualifying certificate had been attained, at the age of twelve and a half, in English of a higher standard, Latin, French, and Mathematics, which constitute the ordinary work of those pupils in country schools who can be induced to prolong the period of their education.<sup>50</sup> [Craik comments 'This is a most extraordinary statement. The memo apparently has been read so carelessly that a references (sic) to timetables removing restrictions which at present exist has been construed into an imposition of fresh restrictions'.]

We are also told as a further check on the instruction-course that not only must a definite syllabus of work be submitted, but the timetable showing the relative amount of instruction given in each subject must be submitted, and approved, thus depriving the teacher of all freedom and the school of all elasticity. This imposition of time-tables would enable an Inspector to drive into a corner all that a teacher, or a Board or the parents of the children might think most valuable in order to find time for the study of supplementary courses ... and yet it has to be observed that in Circular 374, issued some months ago, their Lordships, while stating it as their opinion that the pupils of twelve years of age who aim at secondary subjects should be removed to a higher class of school, say that 'in rural schools they have no desire to limit the freedom of instruction'.

Laurie continues:

It is also evident that were this (the total emasculation of country schools) to be the result, the provision of trained teachers with University degrees would soon be wholly unnecessary for any but Secondary and Higher Grade Schools, and that the present and growing practice of graduation on the part of teachers who aim at the ordinary public schools would quickly die out. The Public Schools of Scotland would be virtually converted into what are called in England 'Schools for the Poor'. [Craik's comment; 'nonsense'] A strong line of demarcation also would be drawn between the primary and secondary school, and the teaching profession would be divided into two classes out of sympathy with each other. [in margin 'yes, but as stated in circ 374 the instruction though different in kind is not necessarily lower in degree']<sup>51</sup>

Laurie concludes by summing up his objections:

On the whole it appears to me (I hope I may be mistaken) that if the general policy of the Code is carried out in the spirit of the framers, a) the higher instruction in rural schools in Scotland is at an end, and the school time will be occupied with work which anticipates the industrial occupations of life, but, in the opinion of the highest educational authorities does not prepare for them; [Craik has written 'bunkum' in the margin at this point]; b) that the

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

bridge over which for so many generations many a poor country boy in Scotland has passed to professions which he has adorned will be broken down; c) that a cast iron system will be imposed on every school, and all freedom in education will be at an end; d) that the imposition of subjects and time-tables will be (nay, must be) closely followed by interference with methods, and no man or woman save those who are prepared to sacrifice their individuality will willingly enter the educational service of the country; e) that the education of Scotland generally will be depressed; f) that Clause 67 of the Act of Parliament will be ignored by the Education Department, which is bound to obey it, and that what is virtually a new Act revolutionising the educational customs of Scotland will be passed by the mere Minute of a Department.<sup>52</sup>

Laurie himself gave his views a much wider audience through his address to the educational conference in Edinburgh in June 1903, organised by the Edinburgh Local Association of the EIS, in which he repeated and elaborated upon the comments he had made in his report. He also took that opportunity to make clear the philosophical as well as the practical basis on which he objected. He re-iterated his opinion that practical training did not belong in the schools, to any great extent, and that even those who were not destined to study beyond the age of fourteen should be given a liberal education, which would enable themselves to 'realise their potential as human beings'.<sup>53</sup> He summed up his beliefs with great clarity in the article itself:

In this, and in much else, you see illustrated the greatest of all educational heresies, the introducing of young unformed minds prematurely to the future occupations of life – the vital mistake of supposing that you prepare the future ploughman and artisan best for their daily tasks by anticipating these tasks in the school. Our business as educators is to occupy our children before they embark on the sordid cares of existence with subjects which expand the mind, touch the heart, and enlarge the moral interests, while introducing them to instruction which disciplines the intellect for all occupations alike, and at the same time gives each a chance of rising in the social scale. Common humanity demands this and educational theory commands it.<sup>54</sup>

It is clear that Laurie succeeded in upsetting Craik. This is evident not only from the notes he made on Laurie's report but from the fact that, having acquired a copy of that report, he then wrote to Professor Patrick, the then chairman of the education committee of the Church of Scotland to complain about it.

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Laurie, 'The Code of 1903 and Freedom in Education', *Educational News*, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1903

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

The Report of your Education Committee has come onto my hands and I have examined it, and the very astonishing note appended on p 873. I trust that the Committee as a whole does not trust to that note as a fair, adequate, or accurate description of the educational policy of the Department, which the writer has evidently neither mastered, not even read with any care or accuracy.<sup>55</sup>

Professor Patrick's reply was less than supportive of Laurie. 'The Secretary is alone responsible both for the matter and form of the "Appended Note". The Committee deliberately refrained from pronouncing any judgement on its contents, but are of the opinion that it should appear as an Appendix on the responsibility of the writer.'<sup>56</sup>

However, Laurie's views did find favour in many quarters. The editorial in *Educational News* praised his address to the educational conference almost without reservation, describing it as 'a marvellous address' and referring to his 'unsparing and unanswerable condemnations of the policy'. It also praises his indictment of, 'Circular 374 with its specious but educationally unsound attempts at premature specialisation'.<sup>57</sup> Craik himself felt it necessary to devote a Speech at Ayr to a defence of supplementary courses. He claimed that he was not going to, 'enter upon the trivialities of personal references to himself and his evil designs and his claims autocratic', a charge which had been made by Laurie. Furthermore:

Consult as much as you liked, you would always leave out from your consultation a few people who thought their advice ought to have been asked. There was one advantage about it that they were tolerably certain to give you, sooner or later, that advice which has not been asked.<sup>58</sup>

However, in making even these remarks he revealed that Laurie had needled him. He then embarked on a vigorous defence of his policies, saying that he was not trying to introduce specialisation, that English was the most fundamental subject to be studied, and that in introducing practical subjects they were not urging 'the teaching of a trade' but 'the making of education into something that was not merely book work, not merely theoretical, but was

---

<sup>55</sup> Letter, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1903, ED 7/1/21, NAS

<sup>56</sup> Letter 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1903, ED 7/1/21, NAS

<sup>57</sup> *Educational News*, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1903

<sup>58</sup> *Educational News*, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1903



felt to by the scholars to be something that would tell upon their real life and help them in after life.’<sup>59</sup>

Craik’s speech at Ayr was not generally well received. The *Educational News* carried extracts from the *Glasgow Herald* and from the *Edinburgh Evening News*. The *Herald* said, ‘What is regrettable is that the Department and the Local Authorities should have somehow got so far out of touch that this “scandalous” quarrel about the education of the older school children has been possible.’ The *Edinburgh Evening News* records, more bluntly that, ‘Sir Henry Craik made a most miserable appearance at Ayr on Saturday.’<sup>60</sup> Laurie returned to the attack in a letter to *The Scotsman* printed on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1903 in answer to Craik’s comments about him but no new points were raised. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that, although Laurie’s efforts certainly caused discussion and even some difficulties for Craik, they did not alter events. As he himself said in the report of the education committee to the General Assembly of 1904:

As was to be expected in view of an Education Bill, the Code of 1904 is merely a reprint of that of 1903. The provision for the instruction of ‘supplementary courses’ for pupils who, having passed a qualifying examination, are retained to the statutory age of 14 (as enacted in 1901) is repeated.<sup>61</sup>

It may be that on some of the issues Laurie overstated his case but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he was essentially right; the eventual outcome was indeed a clear division between primary and secondary education, even in the rural areas and some pupils from these areas did have to travel considerable distances to obtain secondary education, in some highland and island areas it was even necessary for them to board in order to do so; the teaching profession did divide into two distinct sectors, requiring different qualifications. Whether these developments were or were not desirable is, of course, a separate question. Given the subsequent course of events, it is also clear that his interventions at this stage were not, in the end, influential in the sense of determining the outcome. They were, however, instrumental in generating a great deal of debate. As an *Educational News* editorial put it, ‘No further reply to Professor Laurie’s repeated criticisms appeared (after

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Report to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1904, EH7/1/21, NAS

Craik's speech at Ayr), and it was the general opinion that the honours of war rested with the critics. So far, however, it has been a useless victory.'<sup>62</sup> This may be harsh given that in the longer term higher grade schools developed in such a way as to provide a liberal education and by the 1920s a secondary school education had become, in principle, available to all children.

### Postscript

Throughout his life, Laurie argued consistently that the best form of education in schools was a liberal one in the sense that this would best promote self-realisation and the ethical end. He also believed that time within the curriculum was limited. It therefore followed that those capable of benefitting from an advanced liberal education should follow courses aimed at this end and that technical and vocational education should be provided only for those for whom a liberal education would be inappropriate. He was not against either technical or vocational education as such and even believed that the diverting of the less able in these directions would actually promote the liberal for the others through the appropriate concentration of resources.

The shift from a situation where a university education was essentially aimed only at those training for the ministry or for an academic career, which frequently overlapped in any case, to the creation of much closer links between the universities and the professions, to the point where a university education became the recognised route into almost all of them, cannot be said to have started with the creation of the SED in 1885. It was evident in the work of the universities commissions of 1858 and 1876, the first of which suggested honours degrees, which would involve specialisation but would be added on to the more general arts degree, and the second of which proposed the institution of an entrance exam, which would remove the need for foundation courses at university but would at the same time increase the age of entry and make it more difficult for children from poorer backgrounds to go to university at all. However, it was after the creation of the Department that the leaving certificate, which quickly came to be used as an entrance examination for university, was instituted, and the 1889 Act, which incorporated the ideas of the earlier

---

<sup>62</sup> *Educational News*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1904

commissions, was passed and there is no doubt that the Department, under Craik and later John Struthers, his successor, and with the support of men like Alexander Darroch, Laurie's successor as professor of education, gave considerable impetus to the move towards a more vocational focus in universities.

George Davie in his influential books *The Democratic Intellect* and *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect* has argued that this process, which began in the mid-nineteenth century and which he saw as the Anglicisation of Scottish education, particularly in the universities, had the effect of making it less 'democratic'. That is to say, it would tend to produce a classically educated elite and a poorly educated populace who would therefore no longer be able to understand the elite nor to hold them to account. Davie lays the blame for this in large part at the door of the Department, describing them as, 'Undoing, in a couple of decades, an independent tradition built up over centuries, the SED altered the pattern of Scottish education so as to prepare it for the new role of being a subordinate though distinctive part of what was to be an all British system, controlled from the centre.'<sup>63</sup>

Naturally, this move towards specialisation and the utilitarian in education was not unopposed and Davie tells us that, 'a sort of philosophical resistance-movement developed of which the central figure was probably the enigmatic figure of "Scotus Novanticus" – the educationalist S. S. Laurie.'<sup>64</sup> But for Laurie social considerations were always subordinate to the individual and his opposition to the advancement of specialisation towards a utilitarian end surely had less to do with arguments about democratic accountability than with his fundamental belief that the goal of self-realisation for all, the true end for man and therefore for all education, was best served by a liberal education.

Davie's interpretation of events has not been universally accepted. It was certainly a significant factor in the belief which grew up following its publication that there was a serious decline in the 'democratic intellect' following the passing of the 1889 Act. However, Robert Anderson, in *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland*, written in

---

<sup>63</sup> G. Davie, *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect*, (Edinburgh, 1986), iii

<sup>64</sup> Davie, *The Democratic Intellect*, (Edinburgh, 1961), 333

1983 and therefore between Davie's own books, takes issue with him. Whilst agreeing that the 'achievements of the Scottish Enlightenment ran into the sand' in the nineteenth century, he suggests that Davie's account is 'oversimplified' and that, although Scottish university education lost some of its distinctiveness, it did so 'less rapidly than G. E. Davie has suggested'.<sup>65</sup> Anderson then adds an appendix to the same book which he devotes to considering the differences between Davie's interpretation of the changes to university education and his own. In the follow up to his own earlier book which had prompted these comments, Davie then revisits the issues in the light of Anderson's criticisms, which he rejects.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Lindsay Paterson has suggested that in the first two decades of the twentieth century the SED made proper secondary education available throughout Scotland, in many areas for the first time, and that, as a consequence, the tradition of the 'democratic intellect' might, so far from disappearing, have migrated to the secondary sector.<sup>67</sup> He also argues in the same paper that, even if the nineteenth century tradition of the study of philosophy may have declined, its place has been taken by English. If this is accepted, it is surely something of which Laurie himself would have approved, having written that:

It is philosophy, and history treated in a philosophical sense, that hold the key of the temple of Reason. But if philosophy should fail him, literature will be found to be an universal solvent; for it is the creative thought of man on man cast in beautiful forms.<sup>68</sup>

The significance here is not the disagreements between commentators on the development of university education in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. It does not even lie in the importance or otherwise of philosophy or literature in universities or secondary schools. It lies in the fact that the debate has continued so vigorously and for so long. This is a clear indication of the centrality, and difficulty, of the issues with which Laurie was involved. In any case, by the end of Laurie's working life his cause seemed to have been lost. The code of 1903 had overturned what he saw as the advances made by that of 1899 and the SED under Struthers had taken control of the

---

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland*, (Oxford, 1983), 24, 342

<sup>66</sup> Davie, *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect*, (Edinburgh, 1986), 32

<sup>67</sup> L. Paterson, 'The Modernising of the Democratic Intellect: The Role of English in Scottish Secondary Education, 1900-1939', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 24.1, 2004, 45-79

<sup>68</sup> Laurie, 'Function of Schools', *Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888), 16

training of teachers, placing it firmly in teacher-training centres and not in the 'freer air' of the universities. The Department also sought to gain greater control of the universities and to move them in the same direction. However, the argument was by no means over. Laurie, of course, died in 1909 and his contribution had been made. There is no evidence that Laurie's influence in this respect continued after his death in 1909 and a proper analysis of subsequent events could not be undertaken in this thesis. However, it may be noted in brief that after the First World War and throughout the 1920s the debate continued, the importance of philosophy was stressed and a choice between Logic or Moral Philosophy again came to be prescribed in all Scottish universities.

### Conclusion

Laurie was thus at the centre of the debate about public education for forty five years or so. Moreover, it was during this period that crucial changes took place. These included the establishment of compulsory school attendance, the separation of the administration of Scottish education and English education, the introduction of free education and the eventual separation of elementary and secondary education. During this period he held high profile and influential positions: as secretary to the Church of Scotland education committee, as visitor to the Dick bequest trust, as secretary to the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education, and as the first holder of the Bell Chair of Education at Edinburgh University. In all of these roles he has been shown to have been a prolific contributor of opinion. All of these bodies contributed, formally and informally, to the debate.

As has also been shown, many of the reforms which Laurie advocated did in fact come about, even if not always immediately following his advocacy. The *Educational News* of 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1898 quotes Laurie as saying, to his university education class, that in 1881 he had:

delivered from the same place an address on the educational wants of Scotland and that two years before that he had read a paper before the Social Science Congress at Aberdeen on the

government of high schools. Four fifths of the reforms he then urged as necessary were now embodied in the law of the country. For that neither he nor any one person could take credit.<sup>69</sup>

In the nature of public debate and of political progress, this is likely to be true. On the other hand, as the *Educational News* said in the same edition, 'Professor Laurie is too modest in disclaiming credit for the fruits of his advocacy.'<sup>70</sup>

No doubt Laurie's ideas would never have been adopted if they had not struck a chord at the time and no doubt they were shared by many others, for example, the members of APSE were united behind them. No doubt, also, it is simply impossible to ascribe accurately degrees of influence on public policy. That said, Laurie has been shown to have been an extremely lucid and significant contributor to the debate and he can be considered to have been a very influential one.

---

<sup>69</sup> *Educational News*, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1998

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

## **Chapter XII - The Training of Teachers pre-1872**

The training of teachers is a complex topic which can be conveniently divided into three distinct sections. There are the questions of what should be taught and to whom, comprising such issues as the philosophy of education, the curriculum and the social purpose of education. The second section concerns how best to teach, including the best methods of imparting material and the best methods for dealing with individual children. The third section comprises issues such as the organisation of teacher training, the structure of the profession, the funding of the training colleges and the selection of trainees. The first two sections are dealt with elsewhere and it is therefore this third section with which these chapters attempt to deal. Although some background information is necessary in order to place Laurie's ideas and contribution in their proper context, these chapters do not seek to give a full account of the history of the development of the training of teachers, even over the period Laurie's own career. Rather, the aim is to identify those developments on which Laurie commented or with which he was involved and to evaluate the influence he may have had on them.

### Background

No doubt, attempts have been made to organise teaching and to 'train' teachers since the first occasion on which one man tried to tell another how better to do something. However, the first systematic attempt to organise 'teacher training' in Scotland seems to have been in 1826 when the Edinburgh Sessional School became a 'model school' and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland sent teachers who were destined to work in Highland parishes to it to learn how to teach. This Sessional School was formally transferred to the committee of the General Assembly in 1837 as the 'Normal and Sessional School', thus becoming a combined school and teacher training centre. In this form, it issued diplomas to those who had completed the three month training course.

In the West of Scotland, the Glasgow Educational Society was founded in 1834 and it sought to develop normal schools simply by identifying the best schools and attaching an extra class to them for the purpose. Then, in 1836, the foundation stone for Dundas Vale was laid, thus creating the first purpose-built normal school in Britain. This project ran into financial difficulties and in 1841 the society received government assistance in return for the introduction of inspection. The most important development in the 1830s was the creation of the education department of the Privy Council in 1839. From then onwards there was to be increasing central control, either through direct legislation or through the provision or withholding of money. Under the direction of James Kay-Shuttleworth, efforts were made to organise teacher training. In 1841, two separate grants of £5,000 each were made to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to found model and normal schools in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, with conditions attached to each grant. The Glasgow Education Society was to give their buildings in trust to the Church of Scotland and the grants were to repay part of the outstanding debt; the Church became responsible for the rest of the debt but the creditors were to have no further claim on the buildings. In Edinburgh, new buildings were to be erected; the Church had to raise matching funds and the plans had to be approved by the Committee of the Privy Council. This move was crucial to Laurie's own career since it placed the training of teachers in Scotland in the hands of the Church, where it was to stay for some sixty years and it was as secretary to the Church of Scotland's education committee that Laurie became intimately and directly involved in all aspects of the training of teachers. Although the Disruption in 1843 meant that the newly formed Free Church established their own normal schools in competition with those of the Church of Scotland and thereby, presumably, lessened that Church's control of teacher training, Laurie was nevertheless at the centre of events for the whole of the second half of the century.

The second significant action on the part of Kay-Shuttleworth, through the Privy Council, was the creation first of pupil teachers and, later, of Queen's Scholars. The pupil teachers were recruited from promising 13 year-olds who, in return for a little money and extra instruction, both in school subjects and in the art of teaching itself, would help to instruct other children in the school and act as assistants to the schoolmaster and would then, at the age of 18, be expected to go on to train as teachers themselves. The Queen's Scholarship



system provided for financial support for these pupil teachers during their formal training. The minutes of 25<sup>th</sup> August 1846 record the inauguration of the new system, which was to apply both north and south of the border.<sup>1</sup> However, there were already crucial differences between the two countries which were not fully taken into account. There was, in Scotland, a much stronger tradition of at least the possibility of boys from poorer or rural backgrounds going to university by way of the parochial school system. As a consequence, many of these parochial schools, particularly in the north east, had schoolmasters who had attended university themselves, thus equipping them to teach the ‘university subjects’, which would enable their pupils to attend university in their turn. The endowed schools also tended to have schoolmasters who had been to university and, consequently, were able to provide ‘university subjects’ for the older pupils. The intellectual calibre of the pupil teachers, and hence of the Queen’s Scholars, was not very high and this resulted in a work force of teachers who were not themselves up to university standard and it also meant that those who were but who wanted to teach were not likely to attend the training colleges. Arguably, this laid down the conditions which led to a profession which was, for at least a hundred years, divided. Even after training had eventually become established as a necessity for all teachers, there were those who trained but did not attend university, who were destined to teach in elementary or primary schools, as well as those who combined university attendance with professional training. By the time Laurie became involved these patterns had effectively become established. Thus there was the parochial school tradition, with its reliance on ‘university men’ to be defended – this was the position of the Church of Scotland even before Laurie became secretary to its education committee. There were also the training colleges, with their emphasis on methods and on the need for proper professional training, which had become widely accepted as the way forward. One problem which concerned Laurie throughout his working life was how to reconcile these two approaches. Although Laurie wanted progression and believed in greater training for teachers, he was a gradualist and not a revolutionary. He wanted to improve, not remove, the status quo and it is argued here that it was this which conditioned his entire approach to the recruitment of trainees and to the combining of training with university classes which is absolutely central to his contribution.

---

<sup>1</sup> PP 1847 Vol XLV, *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education*

Laurie's contribution came through his work as secretary to the education committee of the Church of Scotland and later from his work as the first holder of the chair of the theory, history and art of education at the University of Edinburgh. He can also be argued to have had an influence through his giving of evidence to a number of royal commissions and parliamentary inquiries and through his various publications and addresses, though it seems reasonable to assert that his involvement in these stemmed from one or other, or both, of his official roles.

#### Secretary to the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland

The circumstances of Laurie's appointment as secretary to the education committee of the Church of Scotland have already been detailed (ch. II) and his influence in this role can be divided into two distinct spheres. There was his role as the effective superintendent of the normal schools and then there was his role in what might be called the 'national' sphere. This comprised all of Laurie's activities which might have had, or might have been designed to have, an influence on the national stage. This would include representations to parliament, dealings with the Scotch Education Department, evidence to commissions on behalf of the Church, speeches relating to the Code, and so on. In the wider context of Laurie's possible influence on the development of teacher training in Scotland it is these latter activities which are the more significant. Before moving on to consider these, however, it is worth looking briefly at the extent of Laurie's day to day involvement with the colleges and, hence, at the influence which he will have exerted at that level.

#### Management of Training Colleges

As the effective superintendent of the normal schools Laurie set examination papers, dealt with staff appointments – and from time to time staff dismissals – and oversaw expenditure on maintenance and development of buildings. Some examples drawn from the education committee minutes will serve to illustrate just how closely Laurie was involved with the detail of the day to day running of the colleges and, therefore, how much influence his decisions must have had. Laurie is recorded as having been in discussions about the

possibility of a new playground,<sup>2</sup> the problem of unsafe cupolas at the normal school<sup>3</sup> and the decision to move the infant and 1<sup>st</sup> standard rooms in the practising school, in which connection Laurie had ‘gone carefully into the matter with the headmaster, and had interviews with tradesmen.’<sup>4</sup> Laurie even ‘expressed concerns that the young men in the colleges were underfed.’<sup>5</sup> He was also involved in detailed questions of timetabling and curriculum. After an offer from Dr Hodgson to deliver a series of twenty-five lectures on the principles of physiology and the laws of health to the students attending the normal school, it was, ‘remitted to the secretary and rector to determine whether these could be arranged without interfering with the regular work of the school and to consider which students should attend.’<sup>6</sup> When a member of committee suggested that there should be ‘an advanced class for young ladies in connection with the Normal School’ the secretary was ‘directed to confer with the Rector on the subject.’ He is also recorded as having ‘authorised the formation of a Physical Geography class in the Practising School.’ It is clear that Laurie was also closely involved with issues of discipline. In 1874 Jane Robson, a student at the Edinburgh training college was expelled for insubordination and reacted by appealing against her dismissal to the education committee and threatening to sue Dr Currie, the rector of the college, and Laurie in the Court of Session on the basis of ‘groundless malice and cruel design’.<sup>7</sup> In the event she did not sue them and had to leave the college but this case gives a clear indication of the level of detail with which Laurie became involved. Nor did this day to day involvement diminish over the years. In 1899 he was asked, following a report from the Ladies’ Committee, to write to each graduating student in the boarding house about their behaviour on the last night of their stay in town. He was to request an explanation from each of them and to say that their certificates would be withheld until such time as a satisfactory explanation was received.<sup>8</sup>

Laurie was also closely involved with all matters relating to staff appointments and, where necessary, dismissals. When the rectorship of the Glasgow training college fell vacant, it

---

<sup>2</sup> ECCS, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1862, CH1/43/2, NAS

<sup>3</sup> ECCS, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1868, CH1/43/3, NAS

<sup>4</sup> ECCS, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1903, CH1/43/6, NAS

<sup>5</sup> ECCS, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1870, CH1/43/3, NAS

<sup>6</sup> ECCS, 31<sup>st</sup> December 1856, CH1/43/2, NAS

<sup>7</sup> ECCS, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1867, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1872, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1875, CH1/43/3, NAS

<sup>8</sup> ECCS, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1899, CH1/43/6, NAS

was Laurie who presented the sub-committee with a list of applicants, printing the strongest candidates – in his opinion – in italics and indicating with a question mark others whom he thought it worth considering. Unfortunately, while the minutes tell us that these names were printed in italics, that form of the list does not survive, so it is impossible to know whether or not it was one of ‘Laurie’s candidates’ who was appointed. Nevertheless, it does indicate that he was central to, and presumably had influence over, the appointment. When the new training college was established in Aberdeen Laurie first tried to persuade the then headmaster of Gordon’s Hospital to apply for the rectorship. When he declined, Laurie recommended Mr Joseph Ogilvie and the committee approved the recommendation.

Over the years there were numerous issues arising out of staff discipline perhaps the most interesting in terms of Laurie’s recorded involvement being that of Mr Anderson who was the head of the practising school in Edinburgh. Complaints were received about Anderson with respect to his use of corporal punishment, especially on girls, his staff management, and the standard of teaching. Furthermore, Anderson was accused of submitting false returns to the education committee which Laurie, in good faith, then sent on to the department in London. There followed a lengthy disciplinary process. Laurie carried out what would now be termed an ‘appraisal’; he also had to go to London to smooth over the problems caused by the false returns. Because Anderson had been in post for eighteen years the committee felt some loyalty to him so Laurie put forward a comprehensive set of proposals designed to address the problems without actually having to resort to dismissal. The proposals are of interest in themselves; in effect, they placed Anderson firmly under Dr Currie’s control and removed his power to act independently. They would no doubt now be considered as ‘constructive dismissal’. They are not, however, relevant to this inquiry, except in so far as, once again, the episode gives a clear indication of Laurie’s day to day involvement with the management of the colleges.<sup>9</sup>

As this brief look at the nature of Laurie’s role as effective superintendent of the training colleges illustrates, he had a very considerable part to play in their day to day running and, therefore, in their development and in the experiences and benefits to be derived by the

---

<sup>9</sup> ECCS, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1872, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1873, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1871, 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1872  
CH1/43/3, NAS

staff and students who passed through them during Laurie's fifty year tenure. This was by no means negligible and, had this been his only contribution to the training of teachers Laurie would still have been an important figure in the history of these colleges. But that was not Laurie's only contribution. Indeed, from the point of view of assessing his influence on the training of teachers in Scotland from a wider historical perspective, it was not even his main contribution.

### The National Scene

The introduction of the Code in 1860 and the Revised Code in 1861 marked the beginning of systematic, and annually revised, control of education by the Privy Council. This, naturally, included everything to do with the supply and training of teachers. These codes, introduced by Robert Lowe, followed on from the royal commission under the Duke of Newcastle, which had looked carefully at every aspect of elementary education in England. However, there was a strong feeling that there were significant differences between the respective situations in Scotland and England which had not been adequately addressed in the codes. This led to establishment of another royal commission, this time under the chairmanship of the Duke of Argyll, set up to:

inquire into the schools in Scotland and, in particular, (1<sup>st</sup>) Parochial Schools ... (5<sup>th</sup>) Normal and Training Schools ... and, in particular, to report your opinion as to whether the Funds voted by Parliament are applied in Scotland in the way most beneficial for the interests of the people.<sup>10</sup>

As well as providing much information in terms of statistics, the reports which this commission produced also provide the best source from which to gauge the attitudes and aspirations of those, including Laurie, who were prominent in Scottish education at the time.

During the 1860s the Scottish educational establishment, in reaction to the Revised Code, realised that there were profound differences of educational philosophy between England and Scotland at the time, presented these differences to the Privy Council and argued for a

---

<sup>10</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland), Second Report*, A2

degree of educational ‘devolution’, were granted the Argyll Commission and, finally, were given their own Act and code. Laurie, mainly through his work as secretary to the Church of Scotland education committee, was an important part of this.

The Revised Code provoked a strong response from Scotland. For the purposes of this thesis, the most significant of these responses was that submitted to the Privy Council by its education committee on behalf of the Church of Scotland. Laurie submitted a memorial on behalf of the committee, signed by Dr Cook, the Convener, to the President of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education, on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1862. Although some of the points which Laurie originally presented to the Church’s education committee were rephrased they were all included in greater or lesser detail. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that Laurie was the main architect of this memorial and that, if it had any effect, he was personally responsible for it. There were other representations made, principally by the Free Church and substantially the same points were made. However, Laurie's memorial was the more detailed.

### Revised Code

Perhaps the most significant indicator of a lack of understanding of the Scottish situation was to be found in Article 59 which stated that, ‘Lay persons alone can be recognised as teachers in elementary schools.’ Whereas the Revised Code of 1861 stated that the, ‘object of the grant is to promote the education of children belonging to the class who support themselves by manual labour’,<sup>11</sup> the situation in Scotland was very different. Ever since the First Book of Discipline, it had been part of the vision and tradition of the Church of Scotland that there should be education available, under their aegis, for all classes. Following the Disruption the Free Church provided schools as well but the principle remained the same. As a consequence, teaching and the ministry had always been closely allied and many men entered teaching as a route into the ministry. This was particularly so in the north east with its strong tradition of parochial schools, supported by the work of, especially, the Dick bequest. Thus it was that Laurie could report to the trustees of the bequest in 1865 that almost all the teachers of the north-eastern counties were graduates of

---

<sup>11</sup> PP 1861 Vol XLVIII, *Revised Code of Regulations*, 11, 5

the University of Aberdeen, and that four fifths of them were licentiates in theology.<sup>12</sup> In the memorial cited above, the Church of Scotland pointed out that the situation was different in Scotland and also that licentiates of theology were not in fact ordained and were therefore technically lay persons. However, the memorial makes it clear that their objection is, ‘not urged against the letter, but against the intention of clause 59.’<sup>13</sup> This is in itself interesting since it suggests that there was a lack of understanding of the Scottish situation by the Privy Council and, at the same time, a difference of philosophical outlook on the role of the Church in education, if not between the two countries then at least between the Privy Council and the Church of Scotland.

In early 1862, Dr Cook, the Convener, and Laurie also secured a meeting with the President of the Council and Robert Lowe at which they followed up the points already made, including the issue of the eligibility of licentiates for grants as teachers in elementary schools. The minutes of 13<sup>th</sup> February 1862 make it clear that, in this respect at least, the meeting was unsatisfactory. They were told that, ‘The admission of Licentiates in theology to recognitions as teachers presented some difficulty because it was feared that in England Dissenting Preachers would combine the offices of teacher and Minister.’<sup>14</sup> This would have had the effect of apparently giving government support for activities which had nothing to do with the objectives of the code, that is with the education of the poor. At this stage, the Minutes simply report that, ‘This point requires to be again represented.’<sup>15</sup> Curiously, the response from the Free Church, whilst ‘firmly remonstrating against the Revised Minute of date 29<sup>th</sup> July 1861 [Revised Code], in its present form being carried into effect in Scotland’<sup>16</sup> makes no specific mention of this clause. It may also be significant that a search for the terms ‘licentiate’ and ‘lay persons’ in the on-line reports of the Argyll Commission produces no results. This may suggest that the Church’s view had prevailed and that it was simply not a major issue.

---

<sup>12</sup> Laurie, *Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865), 310

<sup>13</sup> PP 1862 Vol XLI, *Correspondence and Memorials on Revised Code*, 108

<sup>14</sup> ECCS, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1862, CH1/43/1, NAS

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> PP 1862 Vol XLI, *Correspondence and Memorials on Revised Code*, 101

As has been seen, the Revised Code was suspended as far as Scotland was concerned, although the Inspectors were instructed to inspect ‘as if the Code had been in force’.<sup>17</sup> It may be, therefore, that, although the clause requiring teachers to be lay persons remained part of the Code until 1872, it was simply ignored. In any case, when the temporary board of education for Scotland produced its draft code for Scotland they recommended, ‘the omission of Article 42, on the ground that there are many present teachers in the public schools of Scotland either licentiates or Ministers of the Established or other Churches.’<sup>18</sup> When the code itself was published it was evident that, unusually, the board had not quite had its way. The Privy Council went some of the way towards meeting them but said only that, ‘Lay persons alone can be recognised as teachers; *but this condition will not apply to any person to whom a certificate is granted under Article 66* [my italics].’<sup>19</sup> Article 66 relates to the conditions for the granting of certificates to those teachers who were in post at the time of the passing of the 1872 Act but who might not necessarily fulfil strictly the conditions required of those who would take up their posts after that date. Thus, a concession on the question of the recognition of licentiates and ministers was being made for those already teaching but the ban was not being lifted for new teachers. While it will have been the representations from the Churches which secured this concession and while Laurie will have played a significant role in making these representations, this was not a major concession since in any case it was not the custom to make conditions introduced as the result of new legislation retrospective.

### University Classes

Of much greater significance to the long term development of the training of teachers was the debate which began during the 1860’s about how to blend the two, by then existing, traditions within the teaching profession; the tradition of ‘university men’ and that of ‘normal school’ men and women. There was already more or less universal agreement for the proposition, bluntly expressed, that the university men were under-trained and the

---

<sup>17</sup> PP 1864 Vol XLIV, *Committee of Council on Education. Minute approving instructions to Inspectors of schools (Scotland)*, 1

<sup>18</sup> PP 1873 Vol LII, *Board of Education for Scotland. Minute submitting Draft Articles of Code*, 11

<sup>19</sup> PP 1873 Vol LII, *Scotch Code*, 14



normal school products were under-educated. This position was perhaps most succinctly expressed by HMI Kerr, whose report to the education committee was quoted by the Argyll Commission:

The leading difference between the parish teachers of the old school and teachers trained at Normal Schools is this: the former knew much more and had more general culture, but could not teach so well, having paid little or no attention to the art of teaching. The latter knew much less but could teach better what they did know.<sup>20</sup>

As early as 1834 James Pillans, writing in the *Edinburgh Review*, said, ‘We hinted in a former number at a plan for establishing a Lecturership in Didactics in one or two of our Scottish universities’ and also that:

A course of lectures on the principles and practice of teaching ... could not fail to diffuse correct notions and improved methods all over the country. To secure this result it would only be necessary to make attendance at one of these courses imperative on every candidate for the situation of Parochial schoolmaster.<sup>21</sup>

This, of course, predates the establishment of the normal schools and it also refers to the need to train educated men to teach rather than to ‘educate trained men’. Nevertheless, it shows that thought was being given to fostering teaching skills through the universities. After the creation of the first normal school, it became clear that there was a significant difference between attitudes north and south of the border. In Scotland there was a strong attachment to the ideals first expressed in the First Book of Discipline, that education, to whatever level an individual could manage, was desirable for all. However patchy the delivery might have been in practice, there was a strong attachment to the idea of the ‘ladder’ for the ‘lad o’pairs’. It followed that schoolmasters ought to be provided who would at least be capable of teaching the ‘university subjects’. This was something which the normal schools on their own could not provide. By contrast, the attitude in England seemed to be that public education was for the poorest strata in society and should aim at literacy and little more. From this it followed that there would be a need for a class of teachers who would teach only in the schools for the poor and would therefore not require to know much, if anything, of the more advanced subjects. For this purpose, training

---

<sup>20</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland), Second Report*, cxlvii

<sup>21</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 183 no 117, 184,

through the normal schools would be entirely adequate. Following their meeting with the Lord President and Robert Lowe in 1862, Laurie reported that:

With regard to Normal Schools the results of the interview were less satisfactory. ... It is manifestly the purpose of the Committee of Council to save money on these Institutions, to lower the attainment of Queen's Scholars and at the same time to reduce the number who take a second year's course. The object of this is to furnish for the poorer class of schools teachers who will be content with humble positions. A scheme of this kind may be required in England but it is alien to the habits of Scotland. The complaint in this country has been that Normal School Teachers are at least in one essential subject under-educated.<sup>22</sup>

By the time the Duke of Argyll's Commission was taking evidence, there was an almost universal recognition that there was a place for formal training of teachers in the professional skills required and, furthermore, that this would be likely to be best provided through the training colleges although there were reservations expressed about the effect which an increasing emphasis on normal school training, at the expense of the universities would have. HMI Kerr, in his report to the Committee of Council on Education for 1865 wrote:

It seems to me evident that, in the course of a few years, not only will schools generally, but our parish schools also, be in the hands of teachers trained at the normal colleges. This is the case to a large extent already over the greater part of Scotland, and the custom is being introduced into the parish schools of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray, which have been hitherto almost invariably filled by men who have had a full university curriculum. No one who knows what these schools have been and how much they have done for the children of working men strictly so called, can regard such a change as anything but a serious misfortune.<sup>23</sup>

This was obviously a question to which Laurie gave a great deal of thought. He was questioned about it at length when he gave his evidence to the Argyll Commission and he outlined his ideas on the way forward. It was also during his evidence that he gave the clearest indication that he had indeed been the author of the anonymous article in *Museum*, under the pseudonym 'An Edinburgh Graduate', saying that, 'About four years ago, in an article in *Museum*, I sketched a plan somewhat similar to what I have stated now.'<sup>24</sup> In this article, the author re-iterated that the situation was different in Scotland:

---

<sup>22</sup> ECCS, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1862, CH1/43/1, NAS

<sup>23</sup> PP 1866 Vol XXVII, *Committee of Council on Education: Report, Appendix 1865-66*, 303

<sup>24</sup> PP1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland,) Appendix to First Report*, 124

The Normal College, though previously existing in an embryo state in Scotland, is, in its full development, an English institution, - necessary in England. For in that country the university stands apart from and above the poorer classes of the population, and is separated from them by an interval which it is almost impossible for the class from whom elementary teachers are drawn to pass over; and it was accordingly necessary to provide some special course of instruction and training for teachers, and to devise a means for bringing it within their reach. The normal school system was the result, and though open to many objections, was perhaps the best way of attaining the object in view. In Scotland, on the other hand, the case is different. We have four university seats, where, for £25 or £30 per annum (including maintenance), a man may enjoy the highest education which the country affords. What is of equal importance, the preliminary education may be obtained without difficulty ... even a peasant does not grudge the time spent by his son in the acquisition of learning ... In a country where a connexion and reciprocity already existed between the university and the primary school, and where the natural law of supply and demand had sufficed for many generations to provide an adequate supply of teachers, it would surely have been a wise course to content ourselves with extending and improving a system into which the country had instinctively fallen as that best suited to its wants and habits.<sup>25</sup>

As well as demonstrating a vision for the future, albeit one rooted firmly in tradition, this article again illustrates Laurie's pragmatism, verging on cynicism. In seeking to address the question of the costs involved in training teachers he points out that if all the male students were directed towards the universities there would be a need for only one female training college. Not only that, but it would not be necessary to offer many scholarships for the women because, 'The desirableness of the occupation of primary teacher would itself in Scotland secure a large influx of students at their own charges' and concludes that, 'for £5100 might be attained what, under the existing hot-house system, costs the country £25,000!'<sup>26</sup> Laurie's evidence to the commission is, in essence, an elaboration of the points made in this article. It is perhaps important to bear in mind while reading Laurie's evidence that, as secretary to the Dick bequest he was committed to maintaining the academic standards of the teachers in the north east and to using the money from the bequest to reward schoolmasters who had at least attained university standards in the classical subjects, even if not all of them were actually graduates. At the same time, as secretary to the education Committee, he was responsible for the Church of Scotland training colleges. As a result, his evidence can be seen as an attempt to reconcile these two positions. As always, he seems to have been open to the idea of change – provided that it was gradual and did not do away with the traditions he valued. Essentially, he sought to promote a

---

<sup>25</sup> *Museum Vol 11*, July 1862, 199

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

system which would preserve and even strengthen the old parochial traditions whilst at the same time seeking to promote the introduction of modern teaching methods. Thus, his view was that, 'There can be no doubt in the mind of any person that it [normal school training] has greatly improved the character of teachers as teachers.' However, he thought that as a consequence of promoting the training of teachers:

Some are of the opinion that it has lowered their qualifications generally for the special work of Scotch parochial schools. ... Therefore I think that in any arrangement for securing qualified teachers for Scotland generally, the examination should turn more on Latin and Greek than it has hitherto done.<sup>27</sup>

Laurie's solution to this was to suggest that:

Every teacher should furnish evidence that he has attended a Normal School for a certain length of time for instruction in what are purely professional branches, namely, in the principles and art of teaching; but with respect to other knowledge, whether Latin, Greek or English, he should, in my opinion, be allowed to obtain it where he pleases, his qualifications in these respects being ascertained by an annual examination as at present.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, those who were competent to benefit from attendance at university should go there and should not then be required to study the subject content at a training college, which would provide only professional training for such students.

Laurie makes it clear that he is no progressive in this respect:

I think that the subjects taught in the first two sessions of a Scotch University education, namely, Latin Greek and mathematics, including arithmetic, should form the leading element, if not the sole element (that is to say, that competency in these subjects alone should qualify for a certificate, not excluding, however, the present mode of access to a certificate through the Normal Schools), in any examination of teachers for certificates of qualification.

However, he is also entirely pragmatic. Asked if a university education should be made a requirement for a teaching certificate he replied that:

---

<sup>27</sup> PP1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland), Appendix to First Report*, 120

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

I should not think it necessary for teachers to go to the University to obtain that knowledge, because, if that were insisted on, there would not be a sufficient number of men having the means of going to college, and the country could not be supplied with teachers.<sup>29</sup>

He does not make it clear here whether he is talking in terms of intellectual ability to cope with university courses or in terms of having enough money to make it possible. Either way, he says that there would still be a need for the normal schools. When asked if the normal schools in their present form were necessary, he repeated his assertion that they would always be necessary, but only to provide the practical skills of teaching – provided, of course, that the necessary academic knowledge was acquired elsewhere, presumably at universities. He also conceded that there was no particular necessity for the normal schools to be run on denominational lines and that, therefore, there might not be a need for more than one such training centre in each of Edinburgh and Glasgow, as opposed to the two then being run by the Free Church and the Church of Scotland respectively. However, Laurie's practical side again shows itself and he points out that the training colleges are funded in part by voluntary contributions and that, essentially, people only make these contributions because they are to the Church, and not just to the Church but to their own particular Church. Finally, Laurie argues that, since he believes that all those who are examined for certificates on the subjects taught in university should also be examined on professional training, it follows that there ought to be training colleges in each of the university towns.<sup>30</sup>

In essence Laurie's evidence may be summed up as suggesting that a high level of competency in academic subjects is essential for those wishing to teach in the parochial schools, and, ideally, this should be acquired by attendance at university. Nevertheless, a lesser standard may be acceptable for the 'humbler' schools. An examination for teachers in professional skills is also essential and attendance at a training college is needed for this. Thus, the role of training colleges would be 'downgraded' in the sense that there would be a presumption of attendance at university where possible. This, of course, is not the same as allowing training college students to attend selected university classes. Curiously, it was just this presumption which Henry Craik eventually proposed in a letter to the Churches in

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 121 - 123

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

1904.<sup>31</sup> However, given the lapse of time and the events during the intervening years, it would be unreasonable to suggest that Laurie's views actually brought about this change although he was ahead of his time in this respect at least – even though the motive behind it was the conservative one of trying preserve parochial traditions as far as possible.

There was an interesting postscript to Laurie's evidence. The appendix to the report of the royal commission includes a copy of a letter, written by Laurie to the commissioners after he has given his evidence, seeking to explain the background to his views. He says that his evidence has been given on the assumption that the demand for teachers will increase and that his suggestions for meeting this demand are, 'intended to take advantage of the educational means already existing in the country' and that the relationship of teachers to the universities should be the same as that already existing in the cases of surgeons, lawyers and clergymen. Then he adds that, 'these suggestions were not, however, intended directly to affect the existing Normal Schools; but merely to put the universities and all the other seminaries in a position to compete with them in the production of teachers.'<sup>32</sup>

In one sense this may have been true in that, in general, those who intended to teach and were capable of attending university were not going to the normal schools anyway. In another sense, it was somewhat disingenuous because any development of the system which would have seen those who were intellectually strong enough to cope getting their professional, as well as their academic, training at university would inevitably have left the training colleges with only the weaker candidates. In the absence of any evidence it could only be speculation but it is at least possible that Laurie came in for some criticism within the Church of Scotland education committee for those parts of his evidence which seemed not to support the status quo of the training colleges for which he, as their representative and employee, was responsible.

Dr Cook, the chairman of the Church of Scotland education committee, shared Laurie's attachment to the idea of having university educated men as teachers in the schools. He also suggested that it might be possible to provide those normal school students who were of

---

<sup>31</sup> Reported in ECCS Minutes, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1904, CH1/43/7, NAS

<sup>32</sup> PP1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland), Appendix to First Report*, 139

sufficient intellectual calibre with bursaries so that they could replace the third year of their normal school training with a year at university:

Then you look forward to the resumption of the old habit of taking men who have had a University education, more or less? – I should hope that might be so. I remember suggesting once to Mr Lingen, that instead of the third year at the Normal School which was at that time contemplated, but which has since been given up, they might give a bursary to the students trained at the Normal School to enable them to go to college. I think that would have been a great improvement.<sup>33</sup>

This differs from Laurie's suggestion in that it contemplates normal school training 'finished off' by university, rather than the other way about.

HMI John Gordon held similar views to Laurie. He was clear that there are elements of the knowledge and skills required of teachers which the universities cannot provide and he was realistic enough to recognise that not everyone who might like to go to university can actually do so. 'Neither for male students does the University give so specially the sort of knowledge required for elementary teachers; and if they did, the greater part of the elementary teachers could not find the means of attending the University.' At the same time he believed that attendance at university was desirable for teachers and might perhaps be encouraged by 'a session or two' at university; though he too did not think that this was necessary for those teachers not destined for the 'better' schools. 'It may be suggested for consideration whether a session or two at the University might not be required of the candidates for some schools, as the parochial; to such the Normal Schools would of course be of the less consequence.'<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly, both Maurice Paterson and James Currie, the rectors of the Free Church and Church of Scotland normal schools in Edinburgh, assert strongly the importance of the normal schools and of professional training for teachers. Thus Paterson:

My previous statements have proceeded on the assumption that professional education is absolutely indispensable to a teacher, and that, with a view to giving this, no adequate substitute for the Normal School has yet been proposed.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> PP 1865 Vol XVII, *Education Commission (Scotland), First Report*, 48

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 16

<sup>35</sup> PP1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland), Appendix to First Report*, 127

Though he acknowledges that there may be advantages to be had from attendance at university:

The Education Committee of the Free Church is not insensible to the advantages to be derived from attendance for one or more sessions at the university, and accordingly they hold it out in their prospectus as an inducement to young men to attend the Normal Schools, that students who, during their two years' training, have given proof of distinguished ability in classics or mathematics, combined with superior teaching power, may, should the Education Committee of the Free Church see fit, be encouraged to continue their studies at the university, with a view to still further preparing themselves for their duties as teacher.<sup>36</sup>

This suggestion obviously promotes the idea of the benefits of university education for those who can cope but, as with Dr Cook expressing the views of the Church of Scotland, envisages these being offered after the course at the normal school has been completed.

Thus, there was no shortage of ideas being offered at the time and the commissioners, in the summaries to their reports, give these full weight. They make it clear that either university trained men or normal school trained teachers are preferable to those who have attended neither and that a combination of both is desirable.<sup>37</sup>

The commissioners record that:

He [Kerr] explains in detail a plan, the object of which is to combine the training at Normal Schools with that at the University. Other plans of a similar kind have been submitted to us; particularly by Mr Laurie, and by the two Rectors of the Normal Schools in Edinburgh, Mr Currie and Mr Paterson.<sup>38</sup>

Kerr's plan is printed in full in the appendix to the third report of the commission. It suggests that there should be three routes to qualification as a teacher: 1) attendance for three years at a university, and employment during that time in a selected school near the university. 2) two years attendance at a normal school and two years' probation as a teacher. 3) two years in a school entitled to a double grant together with examination by an inspector.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland), Second Report*, cxlvii

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, cxlviii

<sup>39</sup> PP 1867-68 Vol XXIX, *Education Commission (Scotland), Third Report, Appendix A*



The existence of this plan on its own would serve to demonstrate that Laurie was no lone pioneer in this respect. Even Paterson and Currie, who as rectors of the Edinburgh normal schools had a vested interest in maintaining them as the principal means of entry into the profession, agreed that there was some merit in university exposure for those capable of benefiting, although Paterson thought that these would be few in number and Currie that the present system allowed them to do so anyway, after serving their probationary period in an elementary school.<sup>40</sup> This last seems disingenuous at best since it is likely that practical considerations such as finance and geography would make it significantly more difficult to attend university if it was not in some way built into the training process.

It is significant in terms of the accepted views of the time that all those giving evidence believed that there was a place in the process of the training of teachers for both the universities and the normal schools. None of the respondents believed that university training would be appropriate for all would-be teachers and none of them questioned that fact that, were some way to be found of including university classes for the ablest normal school students, female students would be excluded. Given all this evidence and the obvious consensus they represented, the commissioners themselves conclude that:

Probably one of the simplest plans is, that future schoolmasters should attend only one class in the University each session, and that the rest of his time should be employed in doing the duty of an assistant in a day or an evening inspected school. Three sessions would enable him to acquire a considerable amount of general education; while the requirement that, before attending the University, he should have acted, for at least three years, as pupil-teacher in an inspected school, and that during his attendance at University he should act as an assistant in a school of the same class, would tend to keep up the supply of teachers.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 128, 136

<sup>41</sup> PP 1867 Vol XXV, *Education Commission (Scotland), Second Report*, cxlviii

### Chapter XIII – The Training of Teachers 1872 – 1885

The Act of 1872 marked the point at which the differences between Scotland and England began to be recognised in the framing of separate legislation and codes. It established a temporary board of education for Scotland and it was the submission of a draft code by that board which formed the basis for the first Scottish code in 1873. The board made specific recommendations which were directly relevant to the question of attendance at university classes. In Article 44 they recommend that, in order to be able to start the normal school year at the same time as the university session, examinations, both for entry to the normal schools and for certificates from them, should be held in July, rather than in December.<sup>1</sup> In draft article 101, the board recommend that, ‘students who are attending not less than two classes at any Scotch university during the winter session, may reckon two hours per diem attendance at the training college during the same time as equivalent to full attendance’. Thus, their university attendance would be concurrent, during the university session, with normal school attendance. During the rest of the year, they would attend all the normal school classes ‘except, perhaps, in those subjects in which they had been attending University’. They further suggest (draft article 54) that in the case of male students only those who had either obtained a degree or had attended two winter sessions at university should be eligible for a first class certificate. This did not apply to female students since they could not attend university.<sup>2</sup> When the code was issued in 1873, the recommendations of the board on the timing of the examinations were not taken up. Crucially, however, the recommendation in draft article 101 was accepted in its entirety. This article did not appear in the English version of the 1873 code, thus ensuring an even greater divergence of approach north and south of the border.

Consideration of the evidence given to the Argyll Commission reveals a clear consensus amongst the educationists of the day. Laurie was part of this consensus and it was,

---

<sup>1</sup> 1873 PP Vol LII, *Board of Education for Scotland Minute submitting Draft Articles of Code*, 11

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

presumably, this weight of opinion which led to the inclusion of the all-important new article in the Scotch code of 1873, paving the way for attendance at some university classes for some training college students. Laurie's was by this time an important voice and it is reasonable to assert that he played his part in the movement which brought about change. However, unless it were to be accepted that it was the article in *Museum* which persuaded all those mentioned as having given evidence to Argyll to support his views, he could not be described, on this issue at least, either as an innovative thinker or as the instigator of change. No doubt the article in *Museum* did attract attention but it would be a gross exaggeration to suggest that it created the climate of opinion on its own.

The introduction of the provision for attendance at university classes in 1873 was, of course, the beginning and not the end of the story. However there is a curious postscript to the debate which had clearly taken place by then. A study of the minutes of the Church of Scotland education committee shows that the first mention of university classes does not appear until 13<sup>th</sup> February 1873. This in itself is strange, given that both Cook and Laurie had given evidence to Argyll which touched on the relationship between the universities and the normal schools. Be that as it may, in those minutes Laurie said that it was, 'important that Training Colleges should turn out not just the humbler class of primary teachers but also those who aspired higher'. He drew the attention of the committee to clause 59 of the 1872 Act whereby degrees in arts or science of the universities were accepted as certificates of merit providing the person had also passed an exam on the principles and practice of teaching.<sup>3</sup> This does not address the question of Queen's Scholars attending university classes but it highlights the fact that the two 'classes' of teacher were recognised in legislation. The first direct reference to the classes themselves appears in the minute of 20<sup>th</sup> March 1873 in a memorandum to the committee from Leitch, the then rector of the Glasgow training college. He argues that it would be desirable for the best students at the normal school to attend university classes and suggests that those who would be allowed to benefit from this should be selected by means of examinations in the summer, perhaps in Latin, Greek, maths and English literature. He even goes so far as to submit a draft timetable illustrating how this might be done in practice.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> ECCS, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1873, CH1/43/3, NAS

<sup>4</sup> ECCS, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1873, CH1/43/3, NAS

Laurie responded cautiously to this. He said that he thought that Leitch's idea was a very good one. Indeed, he said that the idea was not new to the education committee, although there does not seem to be any previous mention of it in the minutes. He also says that it not been taken forward because until then it had been impossible to detach the Scotch colleges from the rules applicable to English ones. Laurie pointed out that there would be some obstacles in the way. The education department would first have to approve the idea and then amend the normal school programme. There would inevitably be cost implications and Laurie raised doubts about the suitability of most normal school entrants to take up these classes on the grounds of ability. He was further concerned that, if the idea went ahead, the intellectual tone of the training colleges would be lowered through the loss of their ablest students whilst attending university classes.<sup>5</sup> All this indicates an adherence to his own, previously stated, preferred option of having those who were capable of benefiting from a university education doing so before they ever reached the training colleges so that once there they could concentrate on professional training. It might also be thought to indicate an initial reluctance to embrace change and innovation which had not been his own idea. Again, it does seem that even if he later embraced the idea, Laurie cannot be said to have been a prime mover in bringing about the changes which actually came into being at that time.

During the thirteen years or so following the issuing of the first Scotch code and the establishment of the Scotch Education Department itself in 1885 there were two developments which are of particular relevance to Laurie. The first was the creation of the first chairs of education in Scotland in 1876 (and for that matter the first at any university in Britain as a whole, although Joseph Payne had been appointed professor by the College of Preceptors in London in 1873). The second was the unfolding story, made possible by the code of 1873, of the increasing connection between the universities and the training colleges and of attempts by the universities to gain control of the training of teachers. As shown, there was virtually universal support for the proposition that there should be some connection between the universities and the colleges and for the proposition that at least some of the teaching profession should be 'university men'. However this generally accepted view should be seen against a - usually unstated - subtext. This lay in a general

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

belief that there was a significant part of the population which did not need to be taught by university educated men. This view was stated more explicitly by Lowe and others with reference to education in England but even Laurie, with his lifelong commitment to the parochial schools and to the national shibboleth of the ‘lad o’ pairts’ and the ladder to university, betrayed a similar outlook in a number of his observations. In his evidence to Argyll he said that:

I think if the examination were so pitched as to cover the work done in the first two sessions at the university, you would in that way secure a large number of men who had come up to the mark, and who would be got to fill all the better class of elementary schools, the humbler class being provided for in another way (viz through the Normal Schools).<sup>6</sup>

Laurie’s views on this did not change over the years. Having referred to ‘humbler schools’ in his evidence to Argyll, he says, in his evidence to Parker some twenty years later, that he would be sorry if a man with an honours diploma applied for the recently advertised rectorship of Jedburgh Grammar school.<sup>7</sup> There is no doubt that although Laurie believed that education should provide a ‘ladder’ of opportunity, he also believed that there were, and would always be, strata in society. Thus he can say of teachers that, ‘It will be universally admitted that the Training Colleges can never of themselves supply the country with teachers who will take the social position of university men.’<sup>8</sup> In the event, the connection between the training colleges and the universities did develop throughout the 1870s, but only relatively slowly. There was no change in successive codes to the arrangements for students at the normal schools to attend university classes until 1878 when the following sentence is added, ‘If they attend any of these classes the authorities of the training college may, during the university session, dispense with their attendance at college each day for such time as they deem necessary.’<sup>9</sup>

By the end of the decade efforts were being made by the universities, and Edinburgh University in particular, to gain greater influence over the training of teachers. What they

---

<sup>6</sup> PP 1866 Vol XXVII *Royal Commission To Inquire into Schools in Scotland Appendix to First Report 1865-66*, 121

<sup>7</sup> PP 1888 Vol XLI, *Third report of the committee appointed to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland*, 98

<sup>8</sup> Laurie, ‘Introductory Lecture Session 1876-77’, *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 97

<sup>9</sup> PP 1878 Vol LX, *Code for Scotland*, Article 102b

wanted by then was not to have some students from the colleges attending some university classes but rather for the universities to be completely responsible for the most academically able trainee teachers. Before returning to this theme, it is necessary to consider the most eye-catching development of that decade, the creation of the first chairs of education.

### Chairs of Education

Parallel to the discussion of whether or not students at normal schools should attend university classes was the discussion of whether or not there should be first lectureships and, later, chairs, of education at the Scotch universities. At the heart of this discussion lay a potential confusion between the concept of a chair of education as part of the process of training teachers and the alternative concept of a chair as part of the academic establishment of a university.

Following the creation of the normal school system there was a clearly identifiable difference between 'university men' and the rest and any proposed chairs of education could have had one or more of three possible purposes. They could have been intended to provide normal school students with some exposure to university life and university standards, which is what came into being in Scotland after 1873 but in the form of attendance at existing university classes for some normal school students, not at that stage in the form of lectures on education. They could have been intended to provide university men who wanted to teach with professional training, in other words, with lectures on method, psychology of teaching and so on, closely allied with practical experience in the classroom. This, in essence would have represented an attempt by the universities to become fully involved in teacher training in competition with the normal schools. Indeed, they did make just this attempt over some thirty years but with limited success. The third possibility was to institute lectures on the theory and history of education more as a branch of philosophy than as part of professional training. It was this third option, with an almost token addition of the 'art' of education, which came into being with the establishment of the first chairs in 1876.

After its formation in 1847 the Educational Institute of Scotland promoted a series of lectures in Edinburgh in the winter of 1847-48 and Dr Schmitz, formerly rector of the Edinburgh High School, recorded that, 'The lectures were numerous attended by teachers in Edinburgh and its immediate vicinity, and the public took great interest in them.'<sup>10</sup> By then the normal schools were firmly established and the debate had moved on to the issue of how their work and that of the universities could best be related to each other for the abler trainee teachers. By 1858, Dr Brunton, then president of the EIS, was calling for the establishment of chairs in education<sup>11</sup> and a memorial was presented to the universities commissioners in 1859 arguing the case, but in vain.

The article in *Museum* by 'An Edinburgh Graduate' in 1862 repeats very much the same suggestions:

The special or professional training might be provided by adding to the Faculties of Arts a Chair of the Principles and Practise of Teaching, and connecting it with a model or practising school outside the University walls. ... During two full sessions the student would give his attention to classics, mathematics, and the English language and literature (his familiarity with the ordinary subjects in an elementary school being secured by the bursary entrance-examination); devoting the summer session of each year to attendance on the Chair of Education and a study of organisation and methods in the model school.<sup>12</sup>

Ross paid tribute to this article, ascribing authorship to Laurie, as having been influential in attracting attention to the subject. He wrote further that:

This article attracted the attention of the elderly Pillans who offered £5000 to the cause. He went to London to try to persuade the authorities of the needs for a Chair of Education but was rebuffed by Lowe who told him that 'there is no science of education'.<sup>13</sup>

Professor Hodgson, in his evidence to the Colebrooke Commission, also referred to this, though without mentioning Laurie or the article when he stated that, 'the late Professor Pillans, of this University, some years ago offered to the Government partially to endow a Chair of Paideutics in this University. He offered to give £4000 if the University would

---

<sup>10</sup> Ross, 'Education as a University Subject', *Pamphlets on Education*, (Edinburgh 1883), 7

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 8

<sup>12</sup> *Museum*, July 1862, 199

<sup>13</sup> Ross, 'Education as a University Subject', *Pamphlets on Education*, (Edinburgh 1883),

11

give the same amount. Mr Gladstone was spoken to but the offer met with no encouragement.<sup>14</sup>

Debate on this issue was widespread by the 1870s with contributions from such as HMIs Kerr and Jolly, Professor Ramsay of Glasgow University, all in favour of greater involvement of the universities with the training of teachers; the Free Church in particular expressing reservations. (see ch. II) *The Scotsman* carried a full account of debates on the subject in the House of Commons where Lyon Playfair argued strongly in favour of the creation of chairs whilst Mr McLaren said that popular opinion was against the funding of chairs and that the people of Scotland were perfectly satisfied with the normal schools as the way of producing teachers.<sup>15</sup> It is evident that there was widespread discussion of the idea of establishing chairs of education and that Laurie was part of that discussion. He himself claimed in his introductory lecture of 1881 that:

The agitation (for University Classes for trainee teachers) which began twenty years ago, in consequence of an article written by myself, was ultimately so far successful, that a few years ago the Department recognised the attendance of the elite of the training college students at the Universities, and this has been followed by the University institution in Edinburgh and Glasgow of the Literateship in Arts, which, if taken in addition to the Government certificate, is evidence that the young teacher possesses a University as well as a training college qualification.<sup>16</sup>

He is thus explicitly claiming credit for having brought about first the attendance of training college students at university classes and then for the establishment of the chairs themselves. This is clearly an exaggerated statement of his own contribution. The agitation for greater involvement of the universities in training teachers plainly did not start with the article in *Museum* – whether or not it was actually written by Laurie. The idea of chairs of education also did not originate in the 1860s and there were many other educationalists of the time who also argued for the very changes which eventually came about. Perhaps the most that can safely be said is that Laurie was one of a number of people arguing for a particular course of action which the government did in the event take. He was by then a prominent figure on the Scottish scene and what he said will have been noticed. He was

---

<sup>14</sup> PP 1873 Vol XXVII, *First Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to the endowed schools and hospitals (Scotland)*, 75

<sup>15</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1875

<sup>16</sup> Laurie, 'Introductory Lecture 1881', *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882), 300



therefore by no means irrelevant to the debate but, by the same token, his ideas were mainstream and he cannot be said to have brought about the change on his own.

The clearest indication of Laurie's approach to the role of the new chair is to be found in his inaugural address, delivered on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1876. In this he tackles head on the fact that there were many who have reservations about its purpose and its possible effects and he identifies two distinct camps. There are those who simply cannot see what a chair of education would be for. 'Some are at a loss to know what there is to say on education within the walls of a University, and what the principles and history of the subject have to do with the schoolmaster's work.' Others are more concerned about the effect on the colleges. 'Others, who have not been instructed on those points, dread the competition of an Education Chair with the existing training Colleges.' Laurie dismisses the former objectors as being ignorant and reactionary, saying that they would have been the same people who would have argued against the creation of training colleges some thirty years previously.<sup>17</sup> He does, however, acknowledge that the latter set of objections is more significant.

Laurie makes it clear that, in spite of his general objections to centralisation, the Privy Council had in fact been responsible for the creation of the training college system, to the great benefit of the profession. He argues that, because the Privy Council worked with and through the Churches, opposition to the development of these colleges was minimal and that, 'Quietly and almost unnoticed, a great new Institution has established itself in the United Kingdom, and has overpowered every possible theoretical objection to its existence by the practical benefits it has conferred on the country.' As a consequence, 'the occupation of teacher has been finally raised into a profession by requiring, as the condition of entering it, a professional discipline.'<sup>18</sup>

Laurie also praises the training colleges, describing them as, 'second only to the universities themselves' arguing that, 'the improvements which have taken place even in secondary instruction have been due largely, if not chiefly, to the indirect influence of the Training Colleges, although they exist for the training of primary teachers alone.' Laurie's

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 7, 8, 5

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 5, 6

purpose in thus praising the colleges is, as he himself acknowledges, ‘to limit the range of any argument which might be expected from me’<sup>19</sup> so that he can concentrate only on those future teachers who will pass through the universities.

Laurie was totally convinced that the situation whereby, ‘for two hundred years all the leading teachers of the parochial schools of Scotland have been supplied by the Universities’ and have, ‘carried with them into the most remote parishes some University culture’ has been ‘so beneficial’. His concern therefore is to ensure that this situation is preserved. However, he also acknowledges that professional training has brought great benefits. At the same time, he thought it absurd that, as things stood after the 1872 Act, the teacher emerging from the training college was deemed qualified in a way in which the university graduate was not:

A raw lad from the Hebrides is, after nine or ten months’ training, and while yet barely able to write an ordinary letter, while wholly ignorant of Latin, and acquainted with the merest rudiments of other subjects, technically qualified for any Public School, while a graduate of the Universities is disqualified until he undergoes a further examination. This seems barely credible.

Laurie does not argue that university men need not undergo professional training. He does not even argue that training colleges would be unable to teach Latin, science and philosophy ‘equally well with the universities’. His argument for the presence of education as a subject in its own right within the universities themselves rests on two premises. First, the training college, however well it teaches and whatever subjects it offers simply cannot replicate the ‘atmosphere’ of a university. ‘The broader culture, the freer air, the higher aims of the latter, give to it an educational influence which specialist colleges can never exercise.’ Laurie cannot substantiate this; he simply states that it seems to him that as soon as a college has a practical purpose, such as the production of engineers, army officers, ministers of the church or teachers ‘the mental life of the student becomes at once narrowed, and education in the higher sense disappears altogether.’ Secondly, he argues that it is only within the atmosphere of a university that a student can think about the principles and philosophy of education. He simply poses the question, without supporting argument. ‘Is it not at once apparent that whatever advantage belongs to the study of

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 6

classics and science in a University belongs pre-eminently to studies which ally themselves to philosophy and history?’ In answer to the question of how a university curriculum on these subjects differs from a specialist college curriculum on similar subjects ‘as it does differ in its very essence’, Laurie simply says that the person who cannot see the difference has a defective imagination and ‘To such minds I do not address myself.’ Laurie continues throughout his address to be careful not to run down the training colleges. ‘Far be it from me to say one word in depreciation of Training Colleges.’<sup>20</sup> He will have been acutely aware that one, at least, of his employers, the Church of Scotland, was committed to the colleges and that it was his stated role to promote and support them.

In general, Laurie deplores what he sees as the trend of the times. ‘The Universities are being dissociated from the teaching profession. This evil might be faced.’ Furthermore, ‘All that has been distinctive of Scottish school-life is imperilled.’ Laurie repeatedly asserts his belief that it is the calibre of the men who teach, rather than their specific training, which will have the greatest impact on their schools and this impact, as has been seen, comes about not just through their classroom teaching but ‘above all on the morale of the whole school’. In short, ‘It is by sending out able and ambitious men, not by the manipulation of a Code (although this too has importance) that true education is promoted.’<sup>21</sup> For Laurie such men are to be found only in the universities. He envisages a system which would allow those who are competent to go straight from school to university and would also allow those training college students who are competent to do so to go on to university after one or two years at college, thus qualifying for higher primary or secondary teaching.

Later in his address, Laurie turns on those who doubt that education is a proper subject for university study at all. He says that their objections tend to stem from the fact that education is, ‘too closely allied with practice to be a fit subject for University teaching. It is a subject rather for the laboratory of the schoolmaster than for the theoretical and historical prelections of a Professor.’ Laurie admits there may be some force in this argument but dismisses it on the grounds that it is simply false to suggest that all university study should

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 6-13

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 10, 11

be merely theoretical and that there should be 'as many Faculties as there are recognised professions.'<sup>22</sup>

Laurie's final defence is against those who would argue that education is too vague a subject and is not in its nature 'scientific' enough to be included as a proper subject for university study. He counters this argument simply by pointing out that such subjects as jurisprudence, classics and literature, which are fully accepted as suitable university subjects as just as 'unscientific' as education.

Finally, in this section, Laurie makes it quite clear that he envisages the chair of education not merely as a, 'platform for the airing of theoretical views or the enunciation of crotchets ... but of preparing teachers for their profession',<sup>23</sup> though, in Laurie's mind, that preparation should include a considerable amount of philosophy and history as well as of practice.

Thus Laurie devotes more than half of his inaugural address as the first holder of the chair of the theory, history and art of education to a defence of its right to exist. The rest of the address, which has been dealt with in earlier chapters, considers what it should actually teach, both in terms of philosophy and, to a lesser extent, of method. As has been noted, Laurie was in a difficult position. It was inevitable that, as the holder of this new chair, he should have had to justify its existence. It was also inevitable that some of the opposition to it should have come from the training colleges, to which he was also professionally committed. It is difficult, therefore, to assess the extent to which the address represented special pleading aimed at the Church.

What is certain is that Laurie demonstrated a lifelong commitment to the idea that the presence of university men in the teaching profession was vitally important. This is evidenced in almost everything he said and wrote and by his work for the Dick bequest trust. On one interpretation, Laurie's championing of the cause of education as a university subject can be seen, indirectly, as part of his desire to preserve the north east model of

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 14

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 19

ensuring that, as far as possible, the influence of a university education permeated the schools, not just to prepare those who would themselves aspire to go on to a university but to benefit by association all who would attend any school in which such preparation was taking place. This effect would have been indirect because the study of education as a subject in itself would not have been necessary for the preservation of academic standards in schools. However, if the incentive to study education had resulted in more students having the university experience in other subjects as well then his main objective would have been achieved. Laurie was also convinced that, in order for the profession to have the status in society which he believed it deserved, it would be necessary for it to be associated with the universities. He believed that the institution of the chair would ‘increase the importance of the teaching body’.<sup>24</sup> He also believed that the emphasis on practice had resulted in the pendulum swinging too far towards training and away from academic learning. In this context, his approach could be described as conservative and as being born of a desire to look backwards towards a ‘golden age’ – which may or may not actually have existed.

At the same time Laurie was ever the pragmatist. He recognised that it would have been unrealistic to argue that all future teachers should have a university education and therefore there would have to be training colleges to cater for the women and for the men who would teach only primary subjects and would not have had the ability to cope with more advanced work. Thus Laurie seems to have been trying to ‘square the circle’. He certainly wanted to advance the position of the chair of education, he also certainly wanted to preserve the traditional model, as it was still to be found in the north east, and he did not want to antagonise the Churches by being seen to undermine the training colleges. In all of this, he sought a way forward which was incremental and not radical. It should also be noted that, in taking the line which he did take, he was showing himself to be very much in tune with many other educationalists at the time. As has already been shown, by consideration of their evidence to Colebrooke, such figures as Kerr and Jolly also believed that the way forward should contain some sort of mixture of university and training college for those capable of benefiting and training college only for those who were not. By the mid 1870s

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 11

no-one was still arguing that a degree alone was a proper preparation for teaching in elementary schools.

### J. M. D. Meiklejohn

At the same time as Laurie was appointed to his chair in Edinburgh, John Miller Dow Meiklejohn was appointed to the Bell Chair in the Theory, History and Art of Education in St Andrews. Although it would be impossible to consider Meiklejohn's ideas adequately within the scope of this thesis, it may be instructive to include a brief consideration of his work. Unlike Laurie, Meiklejohn had actually been a teacher and had run a preparatory school before taking up the chair, though he had also been a journalist and war correspondent. Like Laurie he was a prolific writer of books but these were almost all practical text books, which he produced for a range of subjects, including all branches of the study of English, history and geography. Many of these were reprinted both during his lifetime and after his death. In fact, *The English Language; its grammar, history and literature* was re-issued in America as recently as 2006.<sup>25</sup> The notable exception to his concentration on text books was his first book which was a translation from the original German of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>26</sup> Clearly, therefore, Meiklejohn had an interest in philosophy. However, consideration of his inaugural address suggests that this had become of secondary interest to him by the time of his appointment to the chair. Peter Gordon, who produced a collection of inaugural lectures, describes Meiklejohn's as being the more interesting.<sup>27</sup> Obviously, this is a subjective judgement but Meiklejohn's lecture contains nothing of note on the subject of the purposes of the Chair. Indeed, he began by saying that, 'I do not think it at all necessary to enter into any arguments to show why such a Chair as this should exist: that has already been done, far more ably and adequately than I could hope to do, by my colleague in the University of Edinburgh.'<sup>28</sup> In parentheses, it seems as if there must have been some degree of collaboration between Laurie and Meiklejohn before they delivered their lectures since Meiklejohn's was given the day after

---

<sup>25</sup> (Boston, 2006)

<sup>26</sup> (London, 1872)

<sup>27</sup> P Gordon, *The Study of Education: A Collection of Inaugural Lectures, Vol 1. Early and Modern*, (London, 1980), x

<sup>28</sup> *The Study of Education: A Collection of Inaugural Lectures*, ed P. Gordon, (London, 1980), 1

Laurie's and he clearly knew when he was preparing it what Laurie would say. In any case, Meiklejohn, unlike Laurie, did not dwell on the aims of education but concentrated instead on the practicalities. He also demonstrated a much greater interest in psychology and in science than did Laurie saying that:

The theory of education presupposes a thorough-going examination of the growth and development of the young child ... a carefully observing psychologist or band of psychologists, it is to be hoped at some not distant day, will present us with a sufficient number of data and a sufficient induction to guide and to steady the steps of the practical teacher. It may not be at all necessary for the teacher to make himself acquainted with the whole of this psychology, but he must have some first-hand acquaintance, or indeed intimacy with it, otherwise how can he know how to deal with the minds and feelings of the pupils that are brought to him ... On one side of our school life, for example, we fail almost completely. There is no regular and intelligent provision for the teaching of natural science from the beginning.<sup>29</sup>

He is very critical of rote learning, of the, to him accidental, grouping of 'mental food' into subjects and of the employment of 'mechanical methods'. In fact, Meiklejohn reserves his praise for Froebel, paraphrasing his ideas saying that he, Froebel, says that he, 'finds the young child solicited on all sides to a pleasurable activity' and that we should, 'learn from the child; let us observe his doings, and try to help him in whatever he wants to carry out, but always in his own spirit'. He acknowledges that the child has, 'by and by to connect himself with the wider and more difficult world of grown-up persons' but that we should, 'not connect him with this world by force, or by training which is not in harmony with the law of his own inward development; let us, on the contrary, continue as long as we can the play-side of his existence, until by means of play itself, all his faculties have become strengthened'. Finally, the grown up teacher should, 'do as little as he can; let him supply only materials for the hands and direction only for the mind.' Meiklejohn ends by saying that, 'There is much to say for Froebel's thought.'<sup>30</sup> Meiklejohn can, therefore, also be categorised as child-centred and forward-looking.

Meiklejohn was an Assistant Commissioner to the Colebrooke Commission and gave evidence to both Moncreiff (in 1881) and Balfour (in 1886). In addition he gave evidence on the training of teachers to the Parker in 1886. He was also a member of APSE.

---

<sup>29</sup> *The Study of Education: A Collection of Inaugural Lectures*, ed P. Gordon, (London, 1980), 4-7

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 13

However, his writing energies seem to have gone primarily into his text books and, judging mainly from *Educational News*, he does not appear to have contributed anything like as frequently to public debate on education as did Laurie. Meiklejohn was also, necessarily, less practically involved in the development of the training of teachers than Laurie. Initially, his chair seems to have been even less central to the work of his university than was Laurie's and for some time he did not even have a room in the university in which to lecture. Instead, he used his own front room which was big enough for the ten or so students who attended. It is not surprising that the numbers attending were so low because, in contrast to Edinburgh, there was no training college in St. Andrews. Meiklejohn was occasionally asked to inspect schools but the fact that he did not have any responsibilities equivalent to Laurie's for their training colleges in his capacity as secretary to the education committee of the Church of Scotland and for inspections as visitor for the Dick bequest will necessarily have reduced his scope for making a practical impact.

#### The Universities and the Training Colleges

In the years following the 1872 Act training college students were permitted to attend university classes in a limited number of subjects. Over the succeeding years the number of classes permitted was increased from one to two and those students undertaking these classes began to be excused certain college classes to provide time for this. In addition, passes in the examinations set by the university in these subjects began to be accepted in lieu of the equivalent college examinations. Perhaps as a result of this increasing 'cross-over' between the universities and the colleges, the universities themselves began to argue that they should be allowed to have the responsibility for the whole training of some future teachers. Given that Laurie was employed both by the university and by the Church of Scotland it is difficult to believe that there will not have been some conflicting demands on his loyalties. A striking possible example of this is to be seen by comparing correspondence which he had with Sir Francis Sandford, on behalf of the Church, with evidence which he gave at almost exactly the same time to the Universities Commission which was set up in 1876 to 'Inquire into the Universities of Scotland'. In 1877 the universities tried to persuade the Scotch Education Department to allow them to institute a two year diploma



for teachers and to take on responsibility for their practical training as well. Laurie refers to the preparation of this scheme when giving evidence to the commission in October 1876:

It has reference to the teaching profession – the importance of connecting the Universities more closely with it, as closely as they are connected with law and theology. The Universities themselves are, I believe I may say, unanimous on that point. I have charge at present of a scheme to be laid before the Education Department with a view to recognise University training as qualifying a person to hold a public school. It seems almost incredible at first sight that it should be otherwise, and that Normal Schools should have a monopoly of the training of teachers for the public schools of Scotland; but that is what they have.<sup>31</sup>

He concludes his evidence by saying that:

The scheme which is now almost approved of by the four Universities of Scotland is such as will be approved of by any reasonable Normal School, authority. It has already been substantially recognised by the Church of Scotland Normal school authorities . . . The idea of weakening the Normal Schools is simply a delusion, the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland see that.<sup>32</sup>

However, on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1877 we find Laurie writing to Sandford to say:

I am directed by the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland to say that, having been informed that the Scottish Education Department have under consideration a proposal from the Scottish Universities for a University two years curriculum, to be taken by such training college students as pass a qualifying examination, they are prepared to take steps to promote this by an extension of the training college system in Aberdeen and St. Andrews. They trust that they may obtain the consent of the department to the extension.<sup>33</sup>

The letter from Laurie to Sandford does say that the Church committee ‘has been informed’ of the scheme. It is possible that it was Laurie himself who informed them but even if he did it does not look as if he was entirely open with them from the outset. The only previous mention of this issue comes in the minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> June, the day before Laurie wrote to Sandford. These minutes state that:

In view of the proposals recently submitted to the Scottish Education Department on the part of the Universities for a teachers’ curriculum, a sub-committee be appointed to consider and

---

<sup>31</sup> PP 1878 Vol, XXXIII, *Royal Commission to Inquire into the Universities of Scotland Vol II*, 515

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 516

<sup>33</sup> PP 1877-78 Vol XXXI, *Committee of Council on Education in Scotland Report, Appendix*, 85

report as to the manner in which such students may be enabled to combine the advantages of such University instruction with that of a Training College.<sup>34</sup>

The minutes go on to say that he, Laurie, should appraise the department of their willingness to establish training in St Andrews. It is difficult to see how Laurie could be sure in October 1876 that, 'The idea of weakening the Normal Schools is simply a delusion, the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland see that.'<sup>35</sup> This is because it was not till June 1877 that it was resolved that, 'a sub-committee be appointed to consider and report as to the manner in which such students may be enabled to combine the advantages of such University instruction with that of a Training College.'<sup>36</sup> It also seems very unlikely that the education committee really did not consider that the normal schools might have been weakened. It is impossible to be sure what Laurie did or did not say to his committee but it is clear that he was in an awkward position. His letter to Sandford on behalf of the Church would seem to show them as being supportive of the proposed changes at St Andrews and Aberdeen. However, their stance could also be seen as part of an attempt to retain as much control of trainee teachers as possible since if the Church could show that they had in place training facilities in all the university towns then there would have been less reason to establish a rival system. At the same time, it would appear from his evidence to the commission that Laurie was personally in favour of greater involvement on the part of the universities, which would naturally have increased the importance of his chair of education.

In the event, Laurie received a reply from Sandford to the effect that he was being premature in suggesting that any new scheme for the training of teachers would be implemented in St Andrews or Aberdeen. In addition, the education committees of both the Established and the Free Churches received a lengthy memorandum from the department making it clear that a deputation from the universities had met the Lord President of the Council to urge the adoption of the above scheme. Their request had, however, been rejected on familiar grounds. These were, in essence, that the universities could not guarantee adequate moral supervision or religious instruction, could not provide all the

---

<sup>34</sup> ECCS, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1878, CH1/43/4, NAS

<sup>35</sup> PP 1878 Vol XXXIII, *Royal Commission to Inquire into the Universities of Scotland Vol II*, 516

<sup>36</sup> ECCS, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1878, CH1/43/4, NAS

subjects which future teachers would need to learn, could not provide the practical aspects of the training required and could not ensure that students thus trained would in fact go on to teach.<sup>37</sup> These, of course, are exactly the arguments which the Free Church had put forward in cautionary terms at the time of the establishment of the chairs. It would appear therefore that Laurie would personally have preferred to have seen the universities given complete responsibility for the training of at least some teachers at this stage but that, in his capacity as secretary to the education committee he had at the same time to present the case for continued control by the Church. Although the education department did essentially endorse the status quo, they did not reject the idea of greater involvement by the universities entirely. While rejecting the universities' scheme as it stood, Sandford said that their Lordships nevertheless believed that the university connection was an important one for training college students, provided that they were capable of benefiting from it. They believed further that there should be 'certain changes to the Code' which would remove the restriction on the number of university classes which students could attend; would introduce some 'special mark' in the class list, in order to identify students who should be encouraged to attend these classes; and would make special provision for a time allowance in which to attend them.<sup>38</sup> Thus, while the universities may have failed in their primary objective of gaining complete control over the education and training of at least some student teachers the very fact of their pursuit of it brought about a change in the code which meant that they would have a greater part to play in the education of at least the abler future teachers. Obviously, Laurie was involved in the development and advocacy of the scheme and he will no doubt have had some influence on the outcome.

Following the receipt of the letter from Sandford, Laurie wrote on behalf of the Church to welcome the proposed changes. He also returned in that letter to the situation in St Andrews and Aberdeen. The Church did not again suggest the establishment of male training colleges in these two university towns. Instead, they proposed that students who were thought capable of attending university classes should be allowed to choose to do so at either of these two places, rather than simply at Glasgow or Edinburgh. They proposed that the existing female training college in Aberdeen could cope with the normal school

---

<sup>37</sup> PP 1877-78 Vol XXXI, *Committee of Council on Education in Scotland Report*, Appendix, 85, 86

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

instruction there and that arrangements could also be made with Madras College in St Andrews. These new arrangements would be funded out of the budgets for Glasgow and Edinburgh and, in effect, though this is not how Laurie expresses it, Aberdeen would become an outpost of the Glasgow College and St Andrews of the Edinburgh one. Not surprisingly, given the rather sketchy nature of the Church's plans as presented by Laurie, they received an enquiry from Sandford written on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1877 on behalf of the department seeking much more information about what exactly was intended, particularly with regard to normal school training. Laurie did not formally reply to Sandford's enquiries until the 22<sup>nd</sup> December when he wrote that it had been 'unnecessary to return an answer' because 'none of the Queen's Scholars desired to prosecute their studies at Aberdeen or St. Andrews Universities'. In spite of this, the Church returned to their original proposals adding a little detail but Sandford replied to their letter by saying that they should take no action at this stage on the grounds that it was not yet clear what the future demand for teachers in Scotland would be and that it would therefore be premature to expand the provision for their training.<sup>39</sup>

Laurie continued to work for the enhancement of the status of the new chair but not everyone was convinced of its importance. Whilst there were increasing numbers of male students from the training colleges attending at least some university classes, Laurie's lectures in the history, theory and art of education were still not a required part of the training process. It was this which enabled *The Scotsman*, in an editorial, to say:

Some forbearance is due to Professor Laurie, however, in his unfortunate position. He holds a Chair of Education, which nobody is obliged, and few seem inclined, to attend; and it is not unnatural that he should be convinced that all would come right if not only all teachers, but also all inspectors, were made to attend a course on the Theory, History and Practice of Education.<sup>40</sup>

It is, however, instructive to look at the figures both for attendance at university classes by training college students and for attendance at Laurie's own lectures over the period. The inspectors' reports of 1873 reveal that only seven students took up the opportunity to attend university classes whilst still at training college. This figure excludes a further six who

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 91, 93, 96, 97

<sup>40</sup> *The Scotsman*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1879

attended such classes either before or after their training.<sup>41</sup> By 1878, this figure had risen to a total of 110 students attending, between them, a total of 196 classes.<sup>42</sup> By 1885 the figure had risen again, to 138 students attending a total of 228 classes in the same subjects as before – Latin, Greek, mathematics, natural philosophy, English literature, moral philosophy and logic – with, in addition, 35 of the 138 attending Laurie's classes in education.<sup>43</sup> This last figure actually compares very well with attendance by training college students at other classes. The most attended university class in 1885 was mathematics, with 76 students taking this subject. Although Laurie's education class attracted just under half this number it should be remembered that there was no professor of education in Glasgow, so the figures are for Edinburgh students alone. The number of Edinburgh students taking mathematics was only 37.<sup>44</sup> Given that education was an optional subject and did not count towards a degree, Laurie's class begins to look much more of a success than *The Scotsman* implied. Laurie clearly had to fight against considerable opposition and prejudice to achieve these results. In 1881 he was sufficiently moved to write twice to Lord Rosebery, in the latter's capacity as Lord Rector of the University, on the position of his subject within the university. In January he writes that, 'It seems almost incredible that the Education Department should do its best to stamp out the study of Education in our Universities' and, 'I think I am entitled to ask for my subject that it shall have at least a fair field.' And finally that, 'In spite of obstructions, I have this year enrolled 33 students – the largest class in any Scottish University except in the compulsory or monopoly subjects.' The reason for his concern is made clear in a second letter written later that year: 'A teacher may go to any University class but if he dares to look near mine, the Department cuts off its usual allowance.'<sup>45</sup> This was rectified in 1883 but it serves to illustrate the problem he faced in trying to establish education as an important subject within the university itself. A small insight into the way in which the chair tended to be overlooked can be gained by looking again at the evidence which Laurie gave to the royal

---

<sup>41</sup> PP 1874 Vol XX, *Committee of Council on Education in Scotland. Report; Appendix 1873-74*, 65

<sup>42</sup> PP 1878 Vol XXV, *Committee of Council on Education in Scotland. Report; Appendix 1878-79*

<sup>43</sup> PP 1886 Vol XXXVII, *Committee of Council on Education in Scotland. Report; Appendix 1886*, xxiv

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>45</sup> Letters from Laurie to Lord Rosebery, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1881, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1881, MS 10077, NLS

commission on Scottish universities in 1877 and at the way in which it was treated. The first volume for the commission's report contains a list of all those who were examined, including, of course, Laurie, together with a summary of the evidence they gave. In Laurie's case, there is a fairly extensive entry summarising his evidence on the possibility of entrance examinations for those students who intended to graduate, the desirability of new chairs, the role of the senatus and the need for libraries. However, it might have been expected that as the first holder of the chair in the theory, history and art of education at the university his views on the place of education in the curriculum and on the relationship between the universities and the training colleges would have been of considerable interest. Laurie does give evidence on these points but only because he himself raised the subject. Towards the end of his evidence he states that, 'There is one other point I wish to refer to. It has reference to the teaching profession, the importance of connecting the Universities more closely with it, as closely as they are connected with law and theology.'<sup>46</sup> This suggests that had he not raised the subject himself then he would not have been questioned on it. It is also significant that the summary of Laurie's evidence in volume 1 of the report of the royal commission makes no mention of that part of it which refers to teachers or to education. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the commissioners did not think that it was important enough to include. If this was the case, then it adds weight to the idea that Laurie and his chair were not regarded as being of major importance to the university.

Whatever the merits of the suggestion that the universities should become more closely involved in the training of teachers, there can be no doubt that there was a need to raise the standard of the entrants to the profession in general. The Church of Scotland education committee sent a deputation to meet with the Duke of Richmond and Sir Francis Sandford to urge them to take steps to raise the qualifications of pupil teachers. There is a record of the points they made in the Church of Scotland education committee minutes of 25<sup>th</sup> September 1879. These record that the deputation consisted of the Convener, Professor Dickson, Sir James Ferguson, Mr Charles Dalrymple MP and Laurie himself. They made the point that, 'they (pupil teachers) are not required to know at 14 as much as would be

---

<sup>46</sup> PP 1878 Vol XXXIII, *Royal Commission to Inquire into the Universities of Scotland*, Vol 11 *Minutes of Evidence*, 515

expected of 13 year olds in the Sixth Standards in the very schools they would serve.’<sup>47</sup> They pointed out further that fully trained Queen’s Scholars were being placed at a disadvantage since they were being made to compete for jobs with assistants who were allowed to teach even though they did not have even the qualifications necessary to enter training college and who, therefore, would not have to paid on the same scales. The deputation reported that the Duke and Sir Francis had, ‘favourably received the suggestions made’.<sup>48</sup> In spite of this optimistic assessment, there were in the event only minimal changes to the code as it appeared in 1880.

### Literate in Arts

There was, however, one instance of change being effected by Laurie. He persuaded the university to institute a diploma to be called ‘Literate in Arts’ in 1880. This was intended to recognise achievement, short of graduation, for those trainee teachers who took, and passed, the requisite number of university courses. Although this initiative rather fell between two stools in that the majority of those who were capable of tackling it preferred to take a degree, it was at least a step, which might not have been taken without Laurie's efforts, to encourage trainee teachers to study at as high a level as they could manage and to enhance the status of the profession thereby. Laurie was clearly pre-occupied with the need to maintain academic standards in the teaching profession. To this end, he argued consistently for a raising of the standards of entry to the training colleges and also for as much exposure to university teaching as possible for all those students who were of the intellectual calibre to benefit from it. But again Laurie was by no means alone in the ideas he advocated. An editorial in the *Educational News* of 20<sup>th</sup> September 1879 also highlighted each of the areas which concerned Laurie and the Church. The author called for better preparation of pupil teachers. ‘The aim should be to prescribe them (English subjects) so extensively (during the apprenticeship) that they need not be introduced in the training college at all.’ He further writes that, ‘The Education Department should demand such an amount of Geography and History & as to put aside the necessity of their being taken into the curriculum of the Training College at all.’ The writer then makes clear the

---

<sup>47</sup> ECCS, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1879, CH1/43/4, NAS

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

purpose of these recommendations. 'The Training College might, by the above curriculum of study, be made what we think it ought to be in these days – a nursery for the university.' This editorial makes many of the same points as does Laurie with regard to the academic standing of future teachers, and for the same reasons – the professional standing of the teacher. 'The time will come when every teacher of standing will be a "University man"'. For, if the teaching profession is to increase in usefulness and status it must do so by increased power in those engaged in the work; if it is to rise in public estimation, it must be by the superior attainments of its members.' Finally, and in some ways most interestingly:

We think a new degree would be a good means. Let the University authorities grant a degree which could be obtained by attendance at two winter Sessions and one Summer Session, and by attaining a certain proficiency in Classics and Mathematics. Let the degree be called Licentiate in Art, and let the regulations provide that the L.A. could be changed for an M.A. whenever the student felt himself able to resume his studies.<sup>49</sup>

David Ross, writing in 1883 also comments on the Universities Commission thus:

During 1876 and 1877 the late Universities' Commissioners collected an immense mass of evidence, examining, among other points, into the propriety of instituting new chairs. There was a remarkable agreement among most authorities on the question of Chairs of Education. It was maintained that for our higher schools the M.A. with honours should be demanded, for our better parish and village schools the M.A. pass might suffice, and that for inferior posts it was desirable to revive the old degree of B.A. or to institute a Literateship in Arts, to meet the case of many who could not take the full curriculum, and whose University qualification might nevertheless be recognised.<sup>50</sup>

Laurie may have persuaded the university authorities to institute just such a diploma or degree in 1880, one year after the publication of the editorial in the *Educational News* and, of course, after the report of the universities commission, on which Ross is commenting, but his was clearly not an isolated view. Thus, again, it appears that Laurie's role was more that of a persuasive advocate of the feeling of the time than as a truly original innovator. This should not devalue his contribution but it does put it into perspective.

Laurie continued to express his views on the training of teachers in his lectures and to promote the status of the chair which he held and to demonstrate his belief both in an 'old

---

<sup>49</sup> *Educational News*, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1879

<sup>50</sup> Ross, 'Education as a University Subject', *Pamphlets on Education*, (Edinburgh 1888), 19,20



fashioned' academic grounding for teachers and in the need to train them properly. He also continued to demonstrate his realism and his acceptance of a pragmatic approach to the problems of supply and demand of teachers. In his introductory lecture for the university session 1881-82 he said that training colleges 'must continue to exist ... for the whole class of male and female teachers'. But entrance examinations for Queen's Scholars in history, political geography, and ordinary grammar should be abolished. These students should do their training college work in the summer session and, *'after the first year this should be tutorial work in the line of the new Literateship in Arts, with the addition of physical geography the first year and physiography the second.'* He then explained that the literateship would be, 'a practical object of ambition for at least one-half of our training college students: the full degree is attainable only by a select few.'<sup>51</sup>

### Summary

It seems safe to conclude that Laurie was at least partially successful in gaining recognition for his work as professor of education. The *Educational News*, in an editorial written in 1883 reported that the recent congress in Aberdeen had unanimously resolved, 'that there ought to be instituted Chairs of Education in the Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow and that a Faculty or Sub-Faculty of Education, with powers to give special a teachers' degree, should be constituted in all Scottish Universities.' This would hardly have happened if Laurie, and indeed Meiklejohn, had been perceived as entirely irrelevant. At the same time, the editor goes on to highlight an issue which was central to the debate and central also to Laurie's position and attitudes. He points out that the increasing ties between the colleges and the universities stemmed from the perceived need to expose the more able students to university classes and that a gradual increase of numbers actually attending these classes has brought them to the point where, 'They (the Colleges) are now in fact, if not in name, affiliated to the Universities ... somewhere about three-fourths of the (Training College students) are actually receiving a University education.' However, crucially, what had brought the system to this point had not been the development of Professor Pillans' argument in favour of chairs, which would have been theoretical rather than practical in their nature, but the evolution of the normal schools into training colleges and pressure

---

<sup>51</sup> Laurie, *On the Educational Wants of Scotland*, (London, 1882), 300 - 302

from them to become involved with the universities. The editor again points out that Laurie and Meiklejohn were to a large extent marginalised and even irrelevant to the developments taking place in teacher training. The editor claims that, 'it [the establishment of Chairs] has not been a success', though he does allow that, 'There is probably no man in Britain who could do so much to make a mere theoretical Chair of Education a success as Professor Laurie, whose unbounded devotion to the cause of education will brook no obstacle that can possibly be removed.'<sup>52</sup>

Although the senatus of Aberdeen University had been rebuffed in its attempts to become involved in the training of teachers they returned to the fray in 1883 when they again produced a proposal for the department which would have let them undertake the training of Queen's Scholars. The Church of Scotland reacted to this proposal by preparing a detailed memorandum of their own in which they again set out their objections to the idea. Their main grounds for objection were those already expressed by the Free Church when the ideas were first mooted in the 1870s. The question was a much larger one than simply whether Aberdeen should be allowed to undertake this – conceding this would have led to a wholesale reform of the entire system since the other universities would have wanted to follow suit and training Queen's Scholars at university would have led to a shortage of students –and therefore of funding - for the Colleges. The education committee did reaffirm that they supported the attendance of Queen's Scholars at university classes and that they would be happy to see this made possible at Aberdeen University but that they, the students, should receive their practical instruction at the Aberdeen normal school. Again, however, nothing came of all of this in the short term and there were no substantive changes to the codes governing the training of teachers during the first five or six years of the eighteen eighties. However, there was still tension between the universities and the colleges and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Laurie himself remained in an uncomfortable position. There were certainly many, Laurie included, who thought the situation less than ideal but there did not seem to be an obvious solution to the problem.

There is no doubt that during this period Laurie was a well known figure on the educational scene. His lectures were well-attended and his pronouncements were widely reported. He

---

<sup>52</sup> *Educational News*, April 7 1883

certainly helped to keep the educational debate in the public eye and will have influenced events but he did not put forward original ideas and he cannot be said to have been solely responsible for any substantial changes during this period.

## Chapter XIV – The Training of Teachers 1885 – 1906

### Parker Committee

The year 1885 saw the creation of the new Scottish Office and the following year a parliamentary committee, under the chairmanship of Charles Parker, was established in 1886 to ‘make inquiries and recommendations in regard to certain questions relating to education in Scotland’.<sup>1</sup> In publishing their first report this committee stated that, ‘in accordance with our instruction’, they focussed first on the training of teachers. The committee took evidence from many interested parties, including the committees of the Church of Scotland and of the Free Church as well as university professors, including Laurie, and her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools. The Church of Scotland submission was signed by Laurie as secretary to the committee. Assuming that Laurie was, at the very least, happy to put his name to this submission (it is more likely that he was in large part its author) he therefore contributed in two distinct capacities to the inquiry.

The committee produced a first report which contained only a single recommendation and which ran to no more than about eighty words in which they ‘strongly recommended’ changes in the Scotch code to make it easier for Gaelic speaking students to become Queen’s Scholars.<sup>2</sup> The issue here was the need for a suitable supply of teachers to work in the Highlands. Many of those educated there, the only possible source of Gaelic speaking teachers, did not reach the required entry standards when considered in open competition and many of those who did come from the Highlands to train as teachers did not return to work there. Laurie’s solution to the problem had been to suggest the establishment of a training college in Inverness which would have provided a one year course for trainee teachers from and for the Highlands. The entry standards would have been different from

---

<sup>1</sup> PP 1888 Vol XL1, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. Second Report*, 5

<sup>2</sup> PP 1888 Vol XL1, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. First Report*, 3

those for the other colleges, which would have addressed the first problem and because the students would only have been given one year's training they would not have been eligible to apply for positions outside the Highlands, thus addressing the second.<sup>3</sup> This idea was not taken up and, instead, Gaelic was recognised as an acceptable language for entrance purposes in 1887. In this instance, therefore, Laurie can not be said to have influenced the outcome of the inquiry.

Examination of all the submissions to the Parker Committee reveals that there was widespread agreement that both the universities and the training colleges should be involved in the training of those teachers destined to teach at the secondary level at least, even if there remained some disagreement about exactly how the balance should be struck.

The submission from the Church of Scotland emphasises their belief in the combination of university and college training and stresses the importance of moral supervision and religious instruction for their students. They repeated their concerns about the standards of entry of pupil teachers and reiterated their worry that over prescription by the Department of the curriculum to be followed was having the effect of restricting the choices which students could make. With regard to the transfer of Queen's Scholars to the university they, 'fail to see that any advantage could be secured which is not attainable by a judicious development of the present arrangements' and, 'strongly object to what is the real and ultimate purpose of the Aberdeen scheme viz the complete removal of all Queen's Scholars from the Training Colleges.'<sup>4</sup> Thus their submission breaks no new ground. The concluding paragraph is perhaps revealing. Here they say that, 'they suggest that the Department should now take into consideration the relation of the literateship in arts instituted by the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow to the Government requirements for the teaching profession.' This, presumably, implies that consideration should be given to attaching more importance to it as a qualification. This would have pleased Laurie and the recommendation would have been made with his support, perhaps even at his instigation. The submission from the Free Church makes very much the same points. They stress that

---

<sup>3</sup> PP 1888 Vol XL1, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. Third Report*, 55

<sup>4</sup> PP 1888 Vol XLI, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. First and Second Reports*, Appendix, 3

the work of the training colleges has raised the standard of teaching and allege that those who would like to see their importance diminish do so specifically in order to get Religious Instruction removed from the curriculum, although they do not offer any evidence to support this claim.<sup>5</sup>

The committee also invited submissions from the training colleges and the universities, although in their report they specifically stated that they, 'desire especially to invite attention to the statements submitted by the Education Committees of the Church of Scotland and the Free Church'.<sup>6</sup> In a sense, all the submissions were predictable in that they all sought to further their own interests and involvement in the training of teachers. Meiklejohn is keen to see St. Andrews become involved in training, putting forward the familiar suggestion that Madras could be used as a basis for a training college.<sup>7</sup> Professor Geddes, Principal of Aberdeen University, argues that students should be free to select Aberdeen instead of being made to follow a course at either Edinburgh or Glasgow. David Ross, the rector of the Church of Scotland training college in Glasgow, considers the training college 'essential' and argues that six months practical rather than three is required. Maurice Paterson, rector of the Free Church training college in Edinburgh, thinks that there is no need for more time at university.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the inspectors of schools could have been expected to have given the most unbiased testimony, having no interests vested in either the universities or the colleges and they came down unanimously in favour of some form of the existing system.<sup>9</sup> Not unnaturally, Laurie also argued in favour of a strengthening of those parts of the system with which he was most closely involved. He reiterated his views on the value of a university education and on the need to release training college students to attend university classes where possible. He also stated that, 'A man who has got a head on his shoulders and knows something of the principles and methods of education, can very

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 2, 7

<sup>6</sup> PP 1888 Vol XLI, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. Second Report*, v

<sup>7</sup> PP1888 Vol XLI, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to Education in Scotland. Third Report*, 137

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 104, 86, 17

<sup>9</sup> PP 1888 Vol XLI, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. Second Report*, 17-19

quickly take up all the points of teaching a class and the organisation of a school.’<sup>10</sup> Laurie was not actually advocating that the universities should become entirely responsible for the training of even some of the students but there is a significant difference between the arrangement whereby some training college students are released during their course to attend university classes and a system whereby some university graduates could attend training college, after they had completed their university studies, to ‘add on’ professional training. It might therefore seem surprising that Laurie could claim that, ‘he believed that his views were substantially in accord with those of his Committee.’<sup>11</sup>

### Recommendations

The Parker Committee made fifteen separate recommendations and, in general, these endorsed the status quo. Recommendations 1 to 7 strongly supported the system of basing the training in teachers mainly in the training colleges but of allowing those who were of the intellectual calibre to benefit by it to attend university classes. They did suggest that greater allowance should be made within the training college curriculum for those students attending the university by being relieved of the necessity to attend college classes during the university session and that the professional training of these students should be concentrated in as short a time as possible.<sup>12</sup> With respect to the first seven recommendations, it is clear that there was no real divergence of opinion between witnesses or between witnesses and the committee of inquiry itself. All, including Laurie, believed that, possibly with minor alterations, the current system was the best that could be devised. recommendations 8 to 10 suggested that certificated teachers who have qualified with a degree or through a course at training college should be considered qualified to take charge of more children than assistants who were not so qualified; that school boards in university towns should encourage assistants to attend university classes and that pupil teachers should also be encouraged to attend suitable courses of instruction. Here again there is nothing remarkable in these recommendations from the point of view of a possible

---

<sup>10</sup> PP 1888 Vol XLI, *Committee to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. Third Report*, 30

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 28

<sup>12</sup> PP 1888 Vol XL1, *Committee to Inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland. First Report*, xv

contribution from Laurie. The remaining recommendations again endorsed the status quo, this time with respect, explicitly, to funding although the committee would have liked to see some simplification of the system, and implicitly, to the denominational nature of the training colleges. This is dealt with in recommendation 11 where it is stated that:

Having regard to the origin and history of the Training Colleges and to the confidence reposed in them ... and looking also to the difficulty of providing any satisfactory substitute, it is desirable to maintain the principle on which they receive grants ... but leaving to the managers ... all responsibility for religion.<sup>13</sup>

It was necessary to address the issue of denominationalism because it had been raised in some quarters but the committee found that, in practice, both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church operated an 'inclusive' policy and that there was no practical danger of a sectarian divide. Here again, the evidence from the Churches and from the inspectors was in accord. The Parker Committee made it clear that they believed that the system provided the state with good value for money. The point, which was made by both Churches, was that the training colleges were run on a combination of state funding and voluntary contribution. If, either the colleges had been required to be completely non-denominational or if the state had taken over total responsibility, then the voluntary element of the funding would no longer have been forthcoming and a considerable extra burden would have been placed on the rates. Again, though Laurie no doubt contributed to the Church of Scotland submission on this point, he cannot be shown to have made a decisive personal contribution.

There was, attached to the above submission, a lengthy second document. This dealt with the attitude of the Church of Scotland to university qualifications, to the attendance of training college students at university and to the proposals by both Aberdeen and St Andrews Universities to become involved in the training of teachers. The education committee urged the promotion of the relatively newly instituted Literate in Arts. In the first instance, they would be happy to see the LA recognised in lieu of the training college second year exams, given that the students would still be receiving practical training in the summer months.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, they asked for support in 'representing to the University

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, Appendix A, 2



authorities that the LA examination should count pro tanto for the M.A.’ and, ‘Where there is a chair of education the instruction given by the Professor should in future be demanded by the Department in lieu of the second year’s professional instruction (apart from practice) given in the training colleges.’<sup>15</sup> This was, to put it politely, disingenuous since Edinburgh was the only city which had both a professor of education and a training college. There was therefore no-one who could have benefited from the proposal other than Laurie himself. The fact that implementation of almost all of Laurie’s proposals would have served to enhance his own position does not make them, of themselves, bad ideas. Nor does it demonstrate that Laurie was motivated by pure self-interest even if, as seems very likely, he was the prime mover in getting these suggestions included in the Church’s submission. Nevertheless, it remains true that that would have been the effect had his views always prevailed.

Following the publication of the Parker Committee reports, the code of 1889 did provide for some training college students to attend a third session of university classes, thus paving the way for graduation in some cases and, perhaps, for the more radical changes which were to be introduced later. There were no other major changes in the national approach to the training of teachers at this stage although there was continued discussion and the universities, with the exception of Glasgow, continued to press for greater involvement in teacher training. Throughout this period Laurie continued to hold on to his oft-expressed opinions. In written evidence to a commission into secondary education in England chaired by James Bryce, he stated that, ‘Most unquestionably the Universities and University Colleges should undertake the work of professional training.’<sup>16</sup> He appended to his evidence details of a scheme for the training of teachers which he said he had organised for Edinburgh. This stipulated that those who were to be trained under this scheme would, among other conditions, have to be graduates, would have to attend classes in the theory, art and history of education and would have to show evidence of practical training and aptitude.<sup>17</sup> This submission provides clear evidence that Laurie, whatever he may have said in his official capacity as secretary to its education committee, was not personally averse to a weakening of the hold which the Churches had had for so long on the training of teachers.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> PP 1895 XLVII, *Royal Commission on Secondary Education Vol 5*, 407

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

### Day Training Colleges in England and Wales.

In contrast to the situation in Scotland, training colleges in England and Wales had, since their inception in 1841, been entirely residential and it is interesting to compare, briefly, their evolution with what was happening north of the border. When they were originally established, they were voluntary and based on the system of church schools. However, by the late 1880s, the passing of the 1870 Act and changing public perception of education had meant that there was a serious shortage of training places and the Cross Commission was set up to consider how provision could be improved. Its full remit was to, 'inquire into the Elementary Education Acts. England and Wales'. It is worth noting that although the education system in Scotland was referred to on numerous occasions, both in respect of the schools and the training colleges, neither Laurie nor Meiklejohn was invited to give evidence. Indeed, the list of witnesses reveals that none was from Scotland. Nevertheless, it is clear that the commissioners were fully aware of the differences in the two systems and, that when it came to considering the training of teachers they saw some advantages in the Scottish system. In the event, they recommended that, 'an experiment should be made of training non-residential students in connection with the local university colleges'.<sup>18</sup> The education department accepted these recommendations and the new code of 1890 provided that, 'A Day Training College must be attached to some University or College of university rank'<sup>19</sup> and that, 'The authorities of a Day Training College must be a local committee, who will be held responsible for the discipline and moral supervision of the students, and for their regular attendance at professorial or other lectures.' This paved the way for the establishment of these colleges and for the future increasing involvement of the universities in the training of teachers. As a consequence, day training colleges were instituted in 1890, first in association with King's College, London, and others quickly followed. One of the earlier ones was in Liverpool in 1891 and Laurie was invited to give the inaugural address<sup>20</sup> at its opening in 1891. These colleges duly opened the way for a closer association of the universities with the training of teachers, as had been happening in Scotland.

---

<sup>18</sup> PP 1888 Vol XXXV, Final report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the Elementary Education Acts. England and Wales, 208

<sup>19</sup> PP 1888 Vol LV, Minute of 10<sup>th</sup> March 1890 establishing a new Code of regulations, 19

<sup>20</sup> Laurie, 'Inaugural Address at Liverpool University College on the occasion of starting the Day Training College', *The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901)

Code of 1895 and the end of Church control.

It was, however, the code of 1895 which signalled radical changes to the system and, in effect, the eventual end of Church involvement in teacher training. An explanatory circular on the code stated that, 'It is now proposed to extend widely, by allowing the whole training to be taken in connexion with the University, the professional part of it, as well as the necessary supervision being undertaken by a Local Committee.'<sup>21</sup> Those who took this path were to be called 'Queen's Students'. There were to be two categories of applicant who would be eligible to become Queen's Students. The first were to be young men and women who had passed the university preliminary examination who would be attending university with a view to graduating in arts or science. This did not pose a problem for the Churches since graduates had always been able to be recognised as teachers by passing an exam after their degree. They even offered to provide religious instruction for this group, thus in effect supporting the proposal. But the second group presented more of a threat. The new local committee were to be allowed to admit anyone who, 'has obtained a higher grade leaving certificate in at least three subjects (one of which must be English), including history and geography, one mathematics, and one an ancient or modern foreign language.'<sup>22</sup> The Churches argued that, since this was a lower standard than that required for the top category of Queen's Scholar, students would elect to become Queen's Students instead and would then have the greater freedom of university rather than the discipline of training college life. They believed that these students would be immature and unable to cope and that the effect of the new code would be to threaten numbers at the training colleges. They further argued that the proposals were educationally retrograde and unnecessary since under the existing arrangements no student who was qualified to benefit was denied access to university classes. In addition, they said that there was no need to create local committees since these already existed in the form of the governing bodies of the training colleges.

The Established and Free Churches were agreed on their response on all these points which were put to the department in the form of a memorandum arising out of a joint conference

---

<sup>21</sup> PP 1895 Vol LXXVIII, *Circular of the Scotch Education Department*, 85

<sup>22</sup> PP 1895 Vol LXXVIII, *Scotch Code 1895*, Article 96

in March 1895. The memorandum went out in the names of the conveners of the two education committees and of Laurie, who had been secretary to the joint conference. Laurie then gave it as his opinion as recorded in the minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> April 1895 that:

The first steps have been taken for the abolition of the present system of administering Training Colleges in Scotland and the Committee should themselves take action to promote the institution of some authority for the training of teachers in Scotland which would secure the interests Educational, religious and financial, of the existing Colleges.<sup>23</sup>

In this he was to be proved right some ten years later. However, not all the changes introduced in 1895 were retrograde from Laurie's personal point of view since it was also in this year that the Edinburgh university graduate diploma was accepted as a qualification giving Laurie's course official recognition at last.

In 1896 a joint deputation from the Church of Scotland, the Free Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church was sent to London to meet with government representatives. They had to return to Scotland without making much progress but they left Laurie behind 'empowered to make such terms as he could'. In fact he appears to have achieved very little. The leader of the opposition declined to make time to see him which, said Laurie, indicated the degree of priority he gave to the matter. He wrote to the Marquis of Lothian and to Lord Balfour and both wrote back in sympathetic terms but, said Laurie, without encouragement. He reported that he was told that pressing the matter would look as if the Churches were afraid of competition.<sup>24</sup> Laurie concluded from this that he could not hope for any action from the House of Lords. He also contacted the university commissioners. They too were sympathetic but they stopped short of taking any action to restrict local committees. In the event, notices were placed in the press in October 1896 to say that university local committees had been instituted and recognised under the code for the training of teachers in St. Andrews and Aberdeen. With a degree of insensitivity, the local committees had agreed to the conditions of the code in terms of responsibility for discipline and so on but proposed that the existing training colleges should be used for the practical training of their Queen's Students and for any instruction not provided by the university. The Churches agreed to cooperate provided that only those who had passed the prelim were

---

<sup>23</sup> ECCS, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1895, CH1/43/5, NAS

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

accepted, as under condition a) of the article 96 above. They believed that this would preserve standards and might even strengthen the colleges themselves. In the short term, this may have been true. Initially, the uptake of these new Queen's Studentships was low. The annual report of the committee of council on education in Scotland for 1900 states that there were 90 Queen's Students divided between St Andrews and Aberdeen Universities but that the training colleges were, 'now recognised for 1,140 students'.<sup>25</sup> As Laurie had predicted, the new system proved to be a staging post to a complete overhaul of the system in the first decade of the new century. By 1907 complete control of the training colleges had passed to the state. But when the end of Church control came it came not with a bang but with a whimper. There was no dramatic legislation forbidding them to continue and no significant protest about the change.

Instead, the Churches received a letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> April 1904<sup>26</sup> suggesting that in future all qualified candidates under article 95(a)2 of the code should come under the care of the local committees, where these were in existence. The effect of this suggestion would have been to direct all the most able students to the universities rather than the training colleges and to create a 'two tier system'. The Church of Scotland and the United Free church held a joint conference to discuss this threat and resolved that they deprecated the suggestion on the usual familiar grounds.<sup>27</sup> However, their objections had no discernible effect and they received a further intimation from Craik in November to the effect that their Lordships had the funding of teacher training under review, referring to 'possible modifications in the position of the Training Colleges under the charge of your Committee'.<sup>28</sup>

The committee responded by passing a resolution making it clear that, 'In the event of a proposal to alter the financial position of the Training Colleges ... they could not carry on if the aid they received from Government was in any way, directly or indirectly, reduced.' They also resolved that, 'They were not prepared to carry on the work of training if the Training Colleges were to be authoritatively restricted to an inferior class of candidates.'<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> PP 1900 Vol XXIV, *Committee of Council on Education in Scotland Annual Report 1899-1900*, 20

<sup>26</sup> Reported in ECCS Minutes, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1904, CH1/43/7, NAS

<sup>27</sup> ECCS 4<sup>th</sup> July 1904, CH1/43/7, NAS

<sup>28</sup> Letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> November in ECCS, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1904, CH1/43/7, NAS

<sup>29</sup> ECCS, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1904, CH1/43/7, NAS

Again, their protests had no discernible effect. Indeed, they received further communication from Craik to the effect that the Churches would henceforth be required to provide 25% of the funding of the colleges. This represented a change of policy and Laurie explained to the committee that if the changes were introduced, resulting in students' fees and payments for books being removed as a basis of calculation of the 75% to be paid by the department, the result would be an increase in the annual costs to the Church of about £7,500. It was again agreed that it would be impossible to continue to operate the colleges on this basis.<sup>30</sup>

Again, the Church's views were over-ridden and in 1905 the new secretary at the education department, John Struthers, introduced a new scheme of provincial committees in each of the four university cities, to be responsible for a teacher training centre and for organising courses for serving teachers. These new provincial committees replaced the rather half-hearted system of local committees. Unlike their predecessors, they were properly constituted with school board representation and the inclusion of representatives from the Inspectorate and the universities. They were to be established in connection with all four universities and they were empowered to accept any 'persons who are duly qualified'.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, financial arrangements were made to provide the Churches with compensation and to transfer all their training college buildings to the state. Thus, it is clear that Laurie had been right when he said in 1895 that the writing was on the wall. None of the representations by the Church, or by Laurie himself, had much effect on the eventual outcome and it remained only for the Churches to tidy up the details of transfer. There was discussion of the best way to value and transfer the capital assets of the Churches and of the extent to which these had or had not been paid for by the Churches themselves over the years. However, while this was obviously an important issue at the time, it had no bearing on the future direction of teacher training and no relevance to the question of Laurie's influence on it.

---

<sup>30</sup> ECCS, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1904, CH1/43/7, NAS

<sup>31</sup> PP 1905 Vol LX, *Minute of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland*, Clause V

### Summary

At almost every stage the arguments which Laurie put forward in favour of change in the way teachers were trained in Scotland would, had they been accepted, have served to promote his own personal interests as well as those of the universities, the colleges or, indeed, the students and it might be thought worth asking to what extent Laurie was motivated by self-interest. There was clearly, inherent in Laurie's various roles as an educationalist, an element of conflict. For the most part, however, he managed to reconcile these conflicts to the apparent satisfaction of his various employers and if the weight of his arguments seem, over the years, to have favoured the interests of the universities more than those of the Church of Scotland then that might be explicable both in terms of the strength of Laurie's belief in university education and in terms of the climate of opinion as it changed over the latter half of the nineteenth century. Ultimately these questions are irrelevant. It is probable that to some extent Laurie was motivated by self-interest – it might be difficult to think of any proponent of change in any sphere to whom the charge could not be applied to some extent. At the very least, those who work in a particular field become identified with those aspects in which they believe and, over time, the promotion of their beliefs inevitably promotes the promoter. In Laurie's case, even when he was advancing arguments supporting his own position he was usually articulating opinions which were also held in other quarters. There is bound to have been some natural self interest but the evidence does not suggest that he pursued this as an end in itself. It was just that what he saw as being in the best interests of education in Scotland happened also to be in his own best interests.

Laurie argued consistently for strong links between the training colleges and the universities in terms of attendance by trainees at university and for recognition of education as a university subject and for the chair itself. He also argued for greater involvement for the universities in the practical side of training. By 1906, when he had formally ceased to be either professor or secretary to the Church education committee, these objectives had been achieved. During his terms of office there had also been an increasing recognition of the importance of proper training and of the need to promote the status of teaching as a profession, both causes which he had repeatedly championed. However, to say this is not to

say that Laurie himself brought about these changes. Although it is true, given his evidence to Argyll and the article in *The Museum*, that he was one of the first to put forward these arguments, he was not the first on any of the causes he espoused and when he articulated his views in later years he was almost always expressing points of view which were widely supported in the educational community. There can be no doubt that he was a forceful and articulate contributor to the debate and no doubt also that his voice mattered. It is possible that had Laurie not held the positions he did and argued as he did the pace of change might have been slower. But, since his ideas were seldom if ever original and since they were always also eloquently supported by others it seems reasonable to suggest that even if Laurie had not been a factor in the debate the outcome would have been the same. This does not mean that his contribution was not influential or important. It does, however, help to put him into perspective as one of many significant influences on the direction of change, rather than as its sole, or even principal, architect.



## Chapter XV – Conclusion

The purpose of undertaking this research was to assess Laurie's influence on the course of Scottish education during his lifetime through his writing as a philosopher and educationist, his work as an administrator and as professor of the theory, history and art of education. As a consequence of this assessment, it was hoped to account for the fact the Laurie has been, as Knox put it, 'almost entirely forgotten'.<sup>1</sup> That Laurie has been forgotten to a greater or lesser extent is not in doubt. The full account of his influence which the author of his obituary in *Mind*<sup>2</sup> called for was never written. In addition, although Darroch pointed out that the volume of Laurie's work was greater than that of any other writer on education of his time,<sup>3</sup> and although most of his books were reprinted several times during his lifetime, none of his work was ever republished after his death either in Scotland or England and only three, *Studies in the history of educational opinion from the renaissance*, (New York, 1969), *A historical survey of pre-Christian education*, (Michigan, 1970) and *John Amos Comenius, bishop of Moravians: his life and educational: ideas*, (New York, 1973), were re-issued in America. It is noteworthy that these three were all histories rather than editions of Laurie's own thought.

As a philosopher, Laurie lacked originality. His ideas derived essentially from the Scottish School of Common Sense. His work did not attract serious attention at the time and modern commentaries do not tend to include him; for example, there is no mention of him in the most recent of these, Alexander Broadie's *A History of Scottish Philosophy*.<sup>4</sup> He cannot therefore be said to have had a direct influence in this sphere. He did not attract followers to his ideas and he left no lasting legacy in this respect. However, his philosophy was vital in the sense that he himself believed it to be important that all educational writing and

---

<sup>1</sup> Knox, *The Educational Writings of Simon Somerville Laurie*, (Thesis at Edinburgh University, 1949)

<sup>2</sup> *Mind*, April 1910, Vol 18, 328

<sup>3</sup> *Educational News*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1909

<sup>4</sup> (Edinburgh, 2009)

practice should be founded on philosophy. His ideas on self-realisation and on the ethical foundation of all education provided his 'inspiring motive', to borrow the phrase which he himself applied to Comenius. It is quite reasonable to suggest that he would have been unable to achieve everything which he did in the sphere of education without this.

It is possible that Laurie's adherence to 'rational' rather than 'experimental' psychology inhibited rather than assisted his ideas on teaching and learning. Certainly, he deprecated the fact that others were over-influenced by 'what they can see and weigh and measure'.<sup>5</sup> However, whatever their basis, his practical ideas on education were enlightened in his day. He articulated a theory about stages of learning, was interested in the way in which children react to authority and to teaching, taking, to an extent, a 'child-centred' view, and believed that the organisation of the time-table, including opportunities for physical exercise and play, had a significant impact on the outcome. Furthermore, he had ample opportunity through his work with the Dick bequest, through his lectures within the university and through his books, which R. D. Anderson describes as having been 'standard fare in the training colleges',<sup>6</sup> to influence successive generations of teachers. However, while he was an articulate and passionate advocate of all the causes he espoused and persuasive in his presentation of his ideas, he was never the first to take up a particular position. The judgement of Oscar Browning in the preface to H. & E. Felkin's translation of Herbart in 1898 that 'Herbart is the only educational writer in modern times who has promulgated a complete system of education, and who has vindicated that place for the science of education in the nineteenth century which Comenius desired for it in the seventeenth',<sup>7</sup> may be harsh but it is indicative of the derivative nature of Laurie's thought. Thus, although he enhanced the reputation of 'educational philosophy' as a subject worthy of study, particularly in his role as professor, giving it a status within the university which no doubt contributed significantly to its subsequent development as a discipline, it cannot be said that Laurie was an original thinker or that he founded a 'school of Laurie'. Again, therefore, he did not leave a lasting legacy in terms of his ideas themselves.

---

<sup>5</sup> Laurie, *Institutes of Education*, (London) 1892), 254

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People 1750-1918*, (Oxford, 1995), 197

<sup>7</sup> O. Browning, 'Preface', *Lectures and Letters on Education* (Herbart) tr. H. & E. Felkin, (New York, 1898)

Laurie served both the Dick bequest and the education committee of the Church of Scotland for over fifty years. In the former capacity he inspected some 130 schools on a biennial basis. He examined their schoolmasters, recommending or withholding grants, and offered advice on teaching methods and on school organisation. In so doing he sustained the work of the bequest in the north east and helped to preserve the parochial tradition of a liberal education and of possible progression to the universities in that area. In this respect, he exercised a considerable, if unquantifiable, influence over generations of pupils and of schoolmasters. In order for the bequest to be able to continue to operate and to have this influence, the trustees had to fight off the threat posed by the upheaval following the passing of the 1872 Act and by re-organisation of endowments in the 1870s and 1880s. Laurie's contribution was crucial to their success in achieving this. Thus Laurie steered the bequest through a difficult period whilst making a significant practical contribution at an individual school level.

Arguably, Laurie faced even greater challenges during his fifty years as secretary to the Church of Scotland education committee. He held office during a period in which education became compulsory and responsibility for elementary schools passed from the Churches to the state. It was also during his term of office that the universities became increasingly involved in the training of teachers and the state exercised ever greater control over the training colleges until eventually taking responsibility for them. On a practical level, Laurie acted as 'superintendent' of the training colleges under the control of the Church of Scotland, thus affecting every aspect of their day to day running from staffing to buildings. This was in itself no small contribution but it was not remarkable in terms of the national scene. In that context, Laurie worked tirelessly for the interests of the Church whose influence was felt on successive codes and legislation through representations made, either in person or in the form of memorials. In general, that meant arguing for the preservation of a liberal education for all and for the importance of the training of teachers and of the training colleges themselves. Laurie was a central figure in all of these debates and was personally responsible for most of the representations which the Church made on these subjects. On most of them he also made his own personal contribution as an independent educationist. Not all of these representations were successful and the Church can be portrayed as fighting a rearguard action against inevitable change. Nevertheless,

they will have affected the pace, and sometimes the direction, of that change and, although Laurie's was seldom if ever a lone voice, he was always an articulate and influential advocate for his views.

As a consequence of Laurie's roles in the Dick bequest and the Church, he became closely involved, first with the reforms which took place within the Merchant Company and then to endowed schools in Scotland as a whole. Even if, as has been argued, the need for change in order to survive was recognised within the Merchant Company before Laurie was commissioned to write his reports, it remains true that it was these reports which enabled the Merchant Company to reform its hospital schools. This in itself was an important contribution which was to have far reaching consequences. As secretary to the Colebrooke Commission and, arising from that, of APSE, Laurie again served to articulate an important strand of educational thinking, again with far reaching effects. Again, however, Laurie's was not a lone voice.

In all of these practical roles Laurie exerted undoubted influence but his most important contribution must have been made as professor of the theory, history and art of education. Laurie was a long term advocate of the need for the study of education in universities and for it to be an integral part of the training of all teachers. Here again, he was not putting forward an original idea but, as ever, he had the eloquence and tenacity to help realise something which might have remained simply an aspiration had it not had supporters of Laurie's calibre. Whilst always having to balance the interests of the Church with respect to the training colleges with his own very clear preference for a university education wherever possible for teachers, he consistently worked to bring about a greater involvement on the part of the universities, not least as part of the process of trying to increase the professional standing of teachers. As a lecturer, he influenced successive generations of students, although Darroch suggests that they did not all understand or appreciate him:

It was this philosophic foundation, expressed at times in an abstract and complex terminology, which, while it may often have repelled the average student, yet attracted, inspired, and enlightened those of his many students to whom the intellectual effort to understand the Universe ... is an ever abiding object of pursuit.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Darroch, 'An Appreciation', *Educational News*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1909

Be that as it may, he increased the attendance at his classes and moved his subject from being an unfunded optional extra, to being an integral part of the training of teachers. During his tenure as professor, education became an accepted and respected subject and the universities became increasingly involved in the practical side of the training of teachers. Arguably as a consequence of this the status of teachers also rose. In order for all of that to happen it was essential that the first holder of the chair in Edinburgh should have been someone with an appropriate vision for its place as an intellectual discipline and an appreciation of its relevance to the teaching profession. It was also essential that the incumbent should have had the necessary skills of advocacy as well as a capacity for perseverance and hard work. As Darroch put it:

The unique and characteristic mark of his (Laurie's) educational writings is not to be found in their extent nor in the influence they exerted, but it is rather to be traced to the fact that they attempted to lay down a definite system or scheme of education, and to establish it upon a philosophical basis.<sup>9</sup>

In doing this Laurie ensured that the establishment of chairs of education in Scotland was a success.

Thus Laurie was central to the development of almost every aspect of education in Scotland for over half a century. During that time, codes were instituted to regulate education on a national basis, the traditional endowment system was reformed, education became first compulsory then free, responsibility for first the schools and then the teacher training colleges passed from the Churches to the state, chairs of education were created, and the universities became involved in teacher training. Laurie contributed to the debate on all of these issues and influenced the outcome to a greater or lesser extent. He had a day to day practical influence on schools and training colleges and on successive generations of students. His contribution was extraordinary and it is no surprise to find him described on his retirement as professor as 'an outstanding figure'.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> *Educational News*, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1903

Laurie's prolific output as an author and his remarkable energy as a professor and as an administrator meant that he became an extremely well known figure on the Scottish educational scene. Indeed, he clearly built a reputation outwith Scotland as well, as evidenced by the invitations he received at different times to become president of the Teachers' Guild and to give the inaugural address at the Liverpool day training college in England and to become the first principal of a new teacher training college in New York. Specialist histories of the development of education in Scotland during the period covered by Laurie's working life, such as those written by R. D. Anderson, Marjorie Cruickshank and James Scotland, never fail to note his contribution. Nevertheless, for all his achievements Laurie was not original either in his philosophy or in his approach to practical issues. Whilst he may often have expressed ideas or advocated causes more eloquently than many of his contemporaries, he was never either the first or alone in doing so and his work was never truly original. Consequently histories of ideas, such as those written by Alexander Broadie, Harold Entwistle or John Darling, do not mention him. Ultimately, it was this lack of originality which meant that his work ceased to be published after his death and that, to repeat Knox's words, he came to be 'almost entirely forgotten'.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

#### National Library of Scotland

##### Letters

George Combe to S. S. Laurie Library of Scotland

Letters from S. S. Laurie to Lord Rosebery, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1881, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1881, MS 10077

#### National Archives of Scotland

##### Letters

Sir Henry Craik to the Marquis of Lothian, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1892, ED/7/1/78

Sir Henry Craik to Professor Patrick, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1903, ED 7/1/21

Professor Patrick to Sir Henry Craik, Letter 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1903, ED 7/1/21

Remarks on The Code of 1903, ED7/1/21

Letter Book of the Endowments Commission No 1, ED2-3

Laurie, S. S., Letter to the ELEA, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1876, 1877/2

##### Minutes

Minutes of the education committee of the Church of Scotland, 1849 - 1909, CH1/43/

Minutes of the education committee of the Free Church, 1860 - 1900, CH3/1429/

Minutes of the Dick bequest, 1854 - 1856, GD1/4/4

Heriot's Hospital Minute Book, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1868, GD421/4

##### Reports, Memorials, Addresses

Laurie, S. S., Address to the Edinburgh Local Association of the EIS, 1903, EH7/1/21

Report to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1904, EH7/1/21

Report of the Edinburgh Ladies' Educational Association, 1877/1.1

Memorandum of the Objects of the Association for the Promotion of Secondary Education, papers of the Duke of Buccleuch, 1876, GD/224/810/8

Memorial to the Duke of Richmond, papers of the Duke of Buccleuch, 1876, GD/224/810/8

Members of Deputation to the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, papers of the Duke of Buccleuch, 1876, GD/224/810/8

##### Journals, Newspapers

*The Edinburgh Review*, 1834

*The Educational News*, 1876-1909

*The Scotsman*, 1855-1909

**St. Andrews University Library**

University of St. Andrews Senatus Minutes, UY452/19

**Printed**

(i) Simon Somerville Laurie

**Books**

*Educational Subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888)

*Ethica*, (Edinburgh, 1885)

*Ethica*, (Edinburgh, 1891)

*Handbook to lectures on the theory, history, and practice of education*, (Edinburgh, 1878)

*Handbook to lectures on the theory, history, and practice of education*, (Edinburgh, 1883)

*Historical Survey of pre-Christian Education*, (Cambridge, 1895)

*Historical Survey of pre-Christian Education*, (London, 1900)

*In Memoriam Catherine Laurie*, (privately printed, 1895)

*Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1892)

*Institutes of Education*, (Edinburgh, 1899)

*John Amos Comenius*, (Cambridge, 1884)

*John Amos Comenius, Bishop of the Moravians. His life and educational works*, (Cambridge, 1881)

*Lectures on language and linguistic method in the school*, (Cambridge, 1899)

*Lectures on language and linguistic method in the school*, (Cambridge, 1903)

*Lectures on the rise and early constitution of universities with a survey of mediaeval education AD 200-1350*, (London, 1886)

*Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta*, (pseudonym Scotus Novanticus), (London, 1889)

*Notes Expository and Critical on Certain British Theories of Morals*, (Edinburgh 1868)

*Occasional addresses on educational subjects*, (Cambridge, 1888)

*On the fundamental doctrine of Latin syntax*, (Edinburgh, 1859)

*On the philosophy of ethics: an analytical essay*, (Edinburgh, 1866)

*On primary instruction in relation to education*, (Edinburgh, 1867)

*On primary instruction in relation to education, with an appendix on 'secondary instruction'*, (Edinburgh, 1874)

*On primary instruction in relation to education*, (Edinburgh, 1883)

*Report on the Hospitals under the administration of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh and general remarks on hospital training*, (Edinburgh, 1868)

*Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1865)

*Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1890)

*Report to the Trustees of the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1903)

*Studies in the History of Educational Opinion Since the Renaissance*, (Cambridge, 1903)

*Synthetica: being meditations epistemological and ontological*, (London, 1906)

*Teachers' Guild Addresses*, (London, 1892)

*The Philosophy of Ethics*, (Edinburgh, 1866)

*The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1882)

*The Training of Teachers*, (Cambridge, 1901)



(ii) Simon Somerville Laurie

#### Journal Articles

Scotus, *Museum*, Vol 1, January 1862, (Edinburgh),  
 Lecture to the Edinburgh Philomathic Society, *The Scotsman*, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 1878  
 'The History of Early Education', serialised in 11 parts, *The School Review*, Vol 1 Nos 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10, Vol 2 Nos 3, 4, 7 and 8, Vol 3 No 4, May 1893 – April 1895  
 'Reflexions Suggested by Psychophysical Materialism', *Mind*, new series, Vol 3, No 9, June 1894  
 'The Renaissance and the School 1440-1580', Parts I and II, *The School Review*, Vol 4, No 3, March 1896 and No 4, April 1896  
 'History in the School', *The School Review* Vol 4, No 9, Nov. 1896  
 'The Metaphysics of T. H. Green', *The Philosophical Review*, Vol 6, No 2, March 1897  
 'The Respective Functions of the Primary, Secondary and University Schools', Parts I and II, *Science*, Vol 9 No 219, April 15 1887 and No 223, May 13 1887  
 'The Growth of the Mind as a Real' in four parts, *The School Review*, Vol 6, Nos 1, 2, 3 and 4, January - April 1898

(iii) Other

An Auld Callant, *Heriotes no Monk or Strictures on the Sermon Delivered to Parents, Children and Governors on the Late Anniversary of George Heriot's Birthday* by Rev. Dr. R. Lee, one of the Governors, and on his proposed alterations on the constitution of the Hospital, (Edinburgh, 1846)  
 Bedford, F. W., *An Address to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science given by F. W. Bedford to their Edinburgh Congress in 1863 entitled 'The Hospital System of Scotland'*, Ed George Hastings, (London, 1864)  
 Lee, R., *Sermon preached before the Governors of George Heriot's Hospital and others on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 1846 being the Commemoration Day of George Heriot's Birthday*, (Edinburgh, 1847)  
 Menzies, A., *Report to the Trustees on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1835)  
 Menzies, A., *Report to the Trustees on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1844)  
 Menzies, A., *Report to the Trustees on the Dick Bequest*, (Edinburgh, 1854)  
 Pillans, J., *Educational Papers*, (Edinburgh, 1862)  
 Pillans, J., *Principles of Elementary Teaching*, (Edinburgh, 1828)  
 Pillans, J., *Rationale of School Discipline*, (London, 1856)  
 Pillans, J., *Three lectures on the proper objects and methods of education*, (Edinburgh, 1836)  
 Ross, D., *Education as a University Subject, Pamphlets on Education*, (Edinburgh, 1883)  
 Ross, D., *The Art of Questioning*, (Glasgow, 1891)

## **Official Publications**

### **(i) Commissions and Inquiries**

#### **1. Newcastle Commission**

*Education Commission to inquire into the state of popular education in England, 4 volumes, Reports of the Commissioners, Minutes of Evidence, Answers to circular of questions (1861), (PP 1861, xxi)*

#### **2. Clarendon Commission**

*Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the revenues and management of certain colleges and schools (1864), (PP 1864 xx) and (PP 1864, xxi)*

#### **3. Taunton Commission**

*Royal Commission appointed to inquire into education given in schools in England not comprised within Her Majesty's two recent commissions. 21 Volumes (1867-68), (PP 1867-68, xxviii)*

#### **4. Argyll Commission**

*Education Commission (Scotland). First Report by Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Schools in Scotland. With an Appendix (1865), (PP 1865, xvii)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Appendix to First Report ... Being Answers to Heads of Examination, and Correspondence (1867), (PP 1867, xxv)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Second Report by Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Schools in Scotland. With an Appendix Elementary Schools (1867), (PP 1867, xxv)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Report on the State of Education in the Country Districts of Scotland (1866), (PP 1867, xxv)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Report on the State of Education in the Lowland Districts of Scotland (1866), (PP 1867, xxv)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Report on the State of Education in Glasgow (1866), (PP 1867, xxv)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides (1866), (PP 1867, xxv)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Statistics relative to Schools in Scotland collected by the Registrars of Births, Deaths, and Marriages (1865), (PP 1867, xxvi)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Third Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners ... Burgh and Middle Class Schools. Together with the General and Special Reports of the Assistant Commissioners (1868), (PP 1867/8, xxix)*

*Education Commission (Scotland). Report on the State of Education in the Burgh and Middle Class Schools in Scotland Vol 11 (1868), (PP 1867/8, xxix)*

## 5. Colebrooke Commission

*First Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland), with Evidence and Appendix* (1873), (PP 1873, xxvii)

*Second Report* (1874), (PP 1874, xvii)

*Third Report* (1875), (PP 1875, xxix)

*Appendix to Third Report* (2 vols. 1875), (PP1875, xxix)

## 6. Moncreiff Commission

*First Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Endowed Schools and Hospitals (Scotland), with Evidence and Appendix* (1873), (PP 1874, xvii)

*Second Report* (1881), (PP 1881, xxxvi)

*Third Report* (1881), (PP 1881, xxxvi)

*Report by the Commissioners on Endowed Institutions in Scotland in terms of the 11<sup>th</sup> section of the Endowed Institutions (Scotland) Act, 1878 ... with Evidence and Appendix [cited as Special Report]* (1881), (PP 1881,xxxvi)

## 7. Balfour Commission

*First Report of the Educational Endowments (Scotland) Commission, with Evidence and Appendix* (1884), (PP 1884, xxvii)

*Second Report* (1885), (PP 1884/5, xxvii)

*Third Report* (1886), (PP 1886, xxviii)

*Fourth Report* (1887), (PP 1887, xxxii)

*Fifth Report* (1888), (PP 1888, xli)

*Sixth Report* (1889), (PP 1889, xxxii)

*Seventh Report* (1890), (PP 1890, xxxi)

## 8. Parker Committee

*First and Second Reports of the Committee appointed to inquire into certain questions relating to education in Scotland; with Appendix* (1888) (PP 1888 xli)

*Third Report* (1888), (PP 1888 xli)

## 9. Bryce Royal Commission on Secondary Education (England and Wales)

*Fifth Report (of seven) Vol 5*, (PP 1895, Vol xlvii)

### (ii) Annual Codes

From 1860, Annual Code to establish conditions for grants and to regulate Education.

From 1873 there was a separate Code for Scotland.

## **Annual Reports**

### **Material relating to Scotland**

*Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education*, 1839/40 – 1857/8,  
*Report of the Committee of Council on Education; with Appendix*, 1858/9 – 1872/3.  
 The annual reports of the SED; *Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland; with Appendix*, 1873/4 – 1907/8

### **Board of Education for Scotland**

*First Annual Report of the Board of Education for Scotland* (1874), (PP 1874, xx)  
*Second Annual Report* (1875), (PP 1875, xxvi)  
*Third Annual Report* (1876), (PP 1876, xxv)  
*Fourth Annual Report* (1877), (PP 1877, xxxii)  
*Fifth Annual Report* (1878), (PP 1878, xxx)  
*Sixth and Concluding Report* (1879), (PP 1878/9, xxv)

### **Other Relevant Publications**

*Report from Select Committee on the State of Education* (1834), (PP 1834, ix)  
*Abstract of Answers by Schoolmasters in Scotland to Questionnaire 1838* (1841), (PP 1841, xix)  
*Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education* (1847), (PP 1847, xlv)  
*Census of Great Britain 1851* (1854), (PP 1854, lix)  
*Correspondence and Memorials on Revised Code* (1862), (PP 1862, xli)  
*Committee of Council: Minute Confirming Alterations to the Education Code* (1862), (PP 1862, xli)  
*Education (Scotland) A bill to make further provision for the people of Scotland*  
*Committee of Council on Education. Minute approving instructions to Inspectors of schools (Scotland)* (1864), (PP 1864, xlv)  
*Royal Commission to inquire into the Revenues and Management of Certain Colleges and Schools*, (PP1864, Vol XX)  
*Scotch Education Department, Minute of the Board of Education for Scotland submitting draft articles of a code for that country* (1873), (PP 1873, lii)  
*Royal Commission to Inquire into the Universities of Scotland Vol II*, (1878), (PP 1878, xxxiii)  
*Instructions to Her Majesty's Inspectors* (1886), (PP 1886, li)  
*Endowments (Scotland) Act 1882, copy of scheme of management of the Dick Bequest* (1890), (PP1890, lvi)  
*Royal Commission on Secondary Education Vol 5* (1895), (PP 1895, xlvii)  
*Circular of the Scotch Education Department* (1895), (PP 1895, lxxviii)  
*Minute of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, Clause V* (1905), (PP 1905, lx)

## Secondary Sources

### Books

- Anderson, R. D., *Education and the Scottish People*, (Oxford, 1995)
- Anderson, R. D., *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland*, (Oxford, 1983)
- Aristotle, *Ethics*, tr J. A. K. Thomson, (Penguin, 1953)
- Bedford, F. W., *History of George Heriot's Hospital*, (Edinburgh, 1872)
- Bedford, F. W., *The Hospital System of Scotland*, ed. G Hastings (London, 1864)
- Bone, T. R., *Studies in the History of Scottish Education, 1872 – 1908*, (London, 1967)
- Boucher, D. (ed), *The Scottish Idealists*, (Exeter, 2004)
- Broadie, A., *A History of Scottish Philosophy*, (Edinburgh, 2009)
- Buchanan, D., *Prominent educational topics: Inaugural Address given to the Glasgow EIS*, (Edinburgh, 1890)
- Comenius, J. A., *The Great Didactic*, tr Keatinge, (London, 1901)
- Cruickshank, M., *The Training of Teachers*, (London, 1970)
- Darling, J., *Child Centred Education and its Critics*, (London, 1994)
- Davie, G. E., *The Democratic Intellect*, (Edinburgh, 1964)
- Davie, G. E., *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect*, (Edinburgh, 1986)
- Dunkel, H. B., *Herbart and Herbartianism*, (Chicago, 1970)
- Entwhistle, H., *Child-Centred Education*, (London, 1970)
- Gordon, P. (ed), *The Study of Education: A Collection of Inaugural Lectures*, (London, 1980)
- Guthrie, T., *A Plea for ragged Schools or Prevention is better than Cure*, (Edinburgh, 1847)
- Herbart, J., *Letters and Lectures*, tr Felkin, (New York, 1898)
- Herbart, J., *Outlines of Educational Doctrine*, tr Lange and De Garmo, (London, 1901)
- Herbart, J., *The Science of Education*, tr Felkin, (London, 1897)
- Heron, A., *The Merchant Company – Its Rise and Progress*, (Edinburgh 1903)
- Howie, L., *George Watson's College, An Illustrated History*, (Edinburgh, 2006)
- Humes, W. M., and Paterson, H. M., *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education*, (Edinburgh, 1983)
- Hutchison Stirling, A., *James Hutchison Stirling*, (London, 1912)
- Kant, E., *Ueber Padagogik*, tr A. Churton, (Boston, 1906)
- Kerr, J., *Scottish education from Earliest Times to 1908*, (Cambridge, 1910)
- Knox, H. M., *Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Scottish Education, 1696-1946*, (Edinburgh, 1953)
- Knox, J., *The Works of John Knox Vol 2*, David Laing (ed), (Edinburgh, 1895)
- Morgan, A., *Makers of Scottish Education*, (London, 1929)
- Plato, *Republic*, tr H. D. P. Lee, (Penguin, 1955)
- Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, tr H. E. Butler, (London, 1921),
- Reid, T., *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, (Edinburgh, 1764)
- Reid, T., *Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man Vol 1*, (Dublin, 1790)
- Remacle, G., *La Philosophie de S. S. Laurie*, (Brussels, 1909)
- Reid, T., *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, collected by William Hamilton, (Edinburgh, 1853)
- Rusk, R. R., *The Training of Teachers in Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1928)
- Rusk, R. R., *Doctrines of the Great Educators*, (5<sup>th</sup> Edition revised by J Scotland, Norfolk, 1979)
- Russell, B., *A History of Western Philosophy*, (London, 1984)

- Scotland, J., *The History of Scottish Education*, (2 vols, London, 1969)  
 Smout, T. C., *A Century of the Scottish people, 1830-1950*, (London, 1986)  
 Steven, W., *History of George Heriot's Hospital*, (Edinburgh, 1872)  
 Strong, J., *History of Secondary Education in Scotland*, (Oxford, 1909)  
 Thomson, R., *The Pelican History of Psychology*, (Penguin, 1968)

#### Articles

- Anonymous, Obituary of S. S. Laurie, *Mind*, April 1909, Vol 18  
 Cruickshank, M., 'The Dick Bequest', *History of Education Quarterly*, 1965 Vol 5 No 3  
 Graham, G., *Lecture at Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milan, 2002* (Vitae Pensioro – Pubblicazione dell' Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, 2003)  
 Knox, H. M., 'Simon Somerville Laurie', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 10, No 2, May 1962  
 Paterson, L., 'The Modernising of the Democratic Intellect: The Role of English in Scottish Secondary Education, 1900-1939', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 24.1, 2004, 45-79  
 Seth, A., Review of Metaphysica, *Mind*, October 1884, Vol IX,  
 Watson, F., 'Professor Laurie', *Educational Review*, Vol IX, 1895

#### Thesis

- H M Knox, *The Educational Writings of Simon Somerville Laurie MA, LLD, FEIS, FRSE (1829-1909) First Bell Professor of The Theory, History, and Art, of Education in the University of Edinburgh (1876-1903)*, (Doctoral Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1949)